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Lese Majesty

by Norman
Lockridge

THE PRIVATE LIVES of the DUKE and DUCHESS of WINDSOR

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LESE MAJESTY
THE PRIVATE LIVES OF



THE DUKE & DUCHESS OF WINDSOR

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The Private Lives of
The Duke & Duchess of Windsor

by
NORMAN LOCKRIDGE

NEW YORK
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1958

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by

BOAR'S HEAD BOOKS

Open this book as if you
were entering a sacred temple.
Do not shut it. Let its pages
come to a soft closing. This is
only one of many ways to keep
your integrity in the age of the
Bomb.

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

TO ALL THE SLANDERED

ONES OF MY TIME AMONG

WHOM I HAVE NOT BEEN

INCONSPICUOUS.

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INTRODUCTION



BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

THIS is a story of two human beings, a man and a woman, each born into a different world. In the ordinary evolution of personal destinies, each gathered some of the dust of envy, the inescapable acquirement of those who occupy the dangerous elevations of society. By the time the miracle occurred whereby they swam into each other's ken and became twin stars in the same heavenly system, they were equally loved by those who understood them, and equally hated by those who didn't.

Does it matter that the man was a prince and the woman of a queenly mold, obviously cut to fit the enmity of all those who cast envious slurs at figures in high places? Maybe not to you or to me. But it did matter to a creature who arises in every generation from

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the profoundest slime of being, one we all know in common under the name Dame Rumor. Detest her as we may, she is a true and genuine spellbinder, and there isn't one of us that doesn't listen to her breathlessly, even though we know she lies.

Where Rumor begins to spin her intricate web, Truth is already laid out on his deathbed. The personification is of course an inadequate figure of speech. Rumor is a weed, a toxin, a virus, the paralysis of the mature as well as the infantile — a disease indigenous to all human dwellings and marketplaces, but flourishing most vigorously among the prominent, the wealthy and the titled few.

Rumor counts the months between the marriage of a poor young girl and the day of her confinement. When the young woman is a rich one, Rumor counts the days, the hours and the minutes; she does it swiftly, omnivorously, like a greedy winner adding up a bridge score. In the case of the poor young woman the lust of Rumor may be satisfied with the first sum found. But let the woman be rich or famous and Rumor never lets go. If the glamorous creature is left with a fragment of her original pride, then the calculation must be false. Whatever Rumor's conclusion in the case of a woman of distinction, she bawls it out so loudly and so publicly and in a hoarse voice so deeply tinged with skepticism, that suspicion and condemnation follow even where there is no possible justification.

The disadvantages of the merely rich are multiplied over and over again in the lives of those even more envied unfortunates who arrive in this world bearing the patents of nobility. Uneasy lies the head—! And when it isn't lying uneasily, it must be continually looking over its shoulder.

Rumor was waiting in the bedchamber for the birth, on June 23rd, 1894, of Edward Windsor, son of the Duke and Duchess

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of York, who were later to become His Majesty George V and Queen Mary. Before the poor child was properly bathed and swaddled the accusations began to make their slanderous appearance, growing apace with his weeks and months. The future King of England—if he should live to achieve that eminence—was deaf, dumb, blind or halt, as it suited the fancy of the accuser at that moment. No story, no matter how wild, was advanced without a claim to intimate authority, although the authority might well prove to be some palace servant dismissed for pilfering.

In its own time each of these rumors was discredited and tossed aside. But always, to suit the age of the growing prince, new slanders took the place of the old. He didn't like to play with boys who were not of noble birth. Hence he was a snob. He didn't seek the society of girls. Therefore he was impotent or homosexual. He refused to concentrate on his studies, so he must be idle and without ambition.

Even after the world-famous abdication of his throne to marry the woman he loved, when he might well have thought himself rid at last of the endless vicious taunts, it was charged: first, that he was miserly and preferred to live on anyone's means but his own; then that he was not only an anti-semitic but a Nazi; and finally—and this is the latest—that he is not only a homosexual, but a cuckold to boot.

Having been in the position to become familiar with these charges on home ground, I have, without the blessing of either of my illustrious subjects, undertaken an examination of one and all of them and set down my observations in this little book—which, if you happen to be a reviewer, you need not judge according to its size but rather by its content.

I have found those who slandered the Duke and Duchess to be little people—very mean, poor-spirited people with a dearth

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of imagination and a scanty sense of honor. If they ever believed there was a basis to the accusations spread by them so assiduously and so cruelly, they certainly devoted little energy to establishing them in fact.

The Duke is a man believed by many to suffer from one of the most profound and trying psychological illnesses with which a man — particularly one in high and conspicuous position — can be afflicted. To contend bravely with this disease in childhood, throughout youth and deep into busy manhood must require the most intense effort. But in spite of the handicaps such a struggle could create, he remained true to the rigid and demanding traditions of his station in life. He was not king long enough to become a great king but he is still young enough, as age is considered in our time, to become a great man. Out of the difficulties which continue to confront him very great men have been molded.

As for the Duchess, she would have been a duchess if she had never left her native Baltimore. Wallis Warfield is one of those women who are born into the front ranks of the invisible empire of beauty and nobility. As the record stands she reduced a king to a duke. On the other hand, according to the same record, when she made him her husband she made him king again, this time in a more important realm — her own. The names of thousands who lived out their lives as kings have already been hopelessly forgotten. But as long as people can read or speak, no one will ever forget the name of Edward VIII, who abdicated the proudest of all human thrones to become the husband of the woman of his choice.

What is the nature of this invisible kingdom where the Duke of Windsor now rules? No one knows or is likely to know for a long time. We do know that almost all other kingdoms are dust

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in the sensitive fingers of modernity. A knowledge of this new kind of kingdom would be enlightening indeed. The gossips won't help us, of course. And when faced with the question historians merely stutter. Perhaps it will become better known when the realm itself begins to move in the direction of our practical lives. Perhaps it will let us know in its own way, in its own day, and in its own new musical language. We, who every day face the bomb and our own scared faces, do so in that hope.

CHAPTER ONE

The Worst of the Charges

THE most persistent of the canards against the Duke of Windsor is that he is a homosexual.

- Like other reporters, I've heard such stories for years and disregarded them. The tale that, after his abdication from the throne, when he went to stay in Austria at the chateau of one of the Rothschilds, he quarrelled with the owners over the rent, seemed equally impossible, though it might have come about through a neurotic preoccupation over the loss of his princely perquisites, which must have resulted in a diminished income. There were also charges of a political, therefore more serious nature.

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The charge that he was an anti-semiter and a Nazi sympathizer is much more serious and more substantial. There is no question of his cordial relations with Ribbentrop or of the purely social visit he and the Duchess paid to Hitler. It was not in the line of duty, since he was no longer an official personage. Of course, although I know nothing to indicate it, he may have been carrying out some private mission or investigation for his Government.

It is also a fact that he was friendly with Axel Wenner-Gren and he and the Duchess were married in the south of France at the home of Charles Bedaux, a notorious Fascist, who was arrested early in World War II.

If Windsor ever troubled to deny these charges or to attempt to clear himself of his association with these unsavory persons, certainly they were not dealt with in his memoirs as published by a national magazine, and later in the book bearing his name. But the book takes the story of his life only as far as his abdication. There will surely be a continuation of the King's story in that of the Duke. These matters probably will be satisfactorily explained.

It is also possible, though a little difficult to credit, that he was simply naive. It was the year before the Nuremberg purges when he and his wife visited Hitler, but monstrous practices were already in effect in Germany and had been for years, to the certain knowledge of anyone who cared to read the papers. Perhaps the Windsors didn't read them. It's kinder to suppose that than to suppose that they read them and approved what they saw. And kinder yet and, maybe, more accurate

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to suppose that he visited Hitler on Government business.

However that may be, I've never been intrigued by backstairs history. My interest in royal and other public persons I have met in pursuing the profession of journalism has been confined to their historical importance and effectiveness.

In fact, when I was a young American journalist in London in the Spring of 1921, my mind was far less on history and politics than it was on literature and on love. The contemporary men and women whose writing I cherished were walking, talking entities in the London of that time, which deeply excited me. I was meeting many of them and forming lifelong friendships with some. And the pursuit of love in grey, sedate London had its own antic fascination. I was officially gathering news for one of the great New York newspapers, but I was gathering plenty of rosebuds in the process.

One morning I was sent to interview a dignitary at one of the South American Consulates over a troublesome and persistent rumor that contraband was being smuggled into the Port of London aboard the ships of his country. I knew that he would only indignantly deny it, and I should have to go away and write a story about what he didn't say. So I wasn't sorry to discover that, while he had made the appointment with me for ten o'clock, he never came in until twelve.

He provided me with a perfect excuse not to go back to my office, and since there were no pretty girls to flirt with — I wonder why there are never any pretty girls in foreign consulates; they must keep them all at home — I decided to go out into Manchester Square and see

what was to be seen.

It was a lovely day, the kind that only London can produce, valued because they are so rare, and one did not have to go down to Kew to smell the lilacs. But soft sky and little clouds and budding branches were not enough for me. What was to be seen in Manchester Square was almost entirely a seemingly endless procession of perambulators manned (or, more properly womanned) by the most aggressively unattractive specimens of femininity my unhappy eyes had ever seen. Unfair as it may be, I have always felt about an unattractive woman that she was a deliberate assault on my sensibilities. The children in the perambulators were as beautiful as children always are. But the maids who had brought the children out for this airing under green branch and white blossom were to me a personal offense.

I strolled around the Square looking with a jaundiced eye on the delightful children and wondering why so few of them apparently grow up to be nursemaids, and cherishing rather a grudge, too, because, greatly as I appreciate beauty in children, its principal use value to me lies in its serving as an introduction to their pretty mammas. And there was I, with two hours on my hands, and there wasn't a pretty mamma to be seen.

I was growing discouraged by this relentless buck-toothed parade when I caught sight of a perambulator whose management as well as its contents were of a beauty to sing about. I stopped like a traveller who has suddenly reached an important destination.

That nursemaid was as pretty as all hell. When I told her that the contents of her little painted wagon

were the most precious on the square, she smiled appreciatively. When I added the information that in America a little painted wagon was good vernacular for a beautiful girl, she blushed richly.

She was as shy as she was pretty and talked with the charming soft speech of Walter de la Mare's North Countree. Her name was Sara, she told me, and she had been almost two whole years in London. There was not only this radiant infant for her to push around, but another older one, now in kindergarten.

And did she have a lad at home that she was saving up to go and marry?

No. No lads for her, she told me with a sweep of eyelashes on her creamy cheek. But she had been to the cinema a lot, and she was interested in Americans, and I was almost the first she'd ever met, and were they all like that Douglas Fairbanks, now, always leaping and cavorting about?

I scarcely ever leaped about, I said. In fact, all too much of the time I had to sit down at a typewriter, being a newspaperman, or a pressman, as reporters are called in England.

At the word "pressman" she turned pale, grabbed her perambulator and scurried off, with me in fast and undignified pursuit, clutching my bowler and my stick, and feeling a fool.

"What's the matter?" I asked, when I caught up with her and the careening baby. "Did I frighten you?"

"No-a," she muttered, the North Country accent getting even stronger. "But I must be off."

I was getting a whiff of something that might be

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news. "But you haven't even told me where you live," I said cautiously, "or whom you work for."

"They're nobody," she said hastily, and thereby, of course, immediately convinced me that they were certainly somebody. Else why should she run from a pressman? She was offering me one of those provocative leads that a newsman occasionally gets, seizes and follows with the savage relentlessness reserved by men and women of business for the pursuit of sure profits.

"Sara," I said, as persuasively as I knew how, "how about a bit of dinner with me tonight?"

She shook her head decisively.

"Dinner and the cinema?" I wheedled.

"Can't. I've Baby to mind."

"Well, when do you have an evening off, and what do you do with it when you have one?"

The poor girl was so honest and simple that it was hard for her to defend herself against me. It obviously didn't occur to her to lie, or to tell me to go away and mind my own business. I asked her, so she told me. She was off the following evening, and she usually went to the cinema when she was free.

"Then let me call for you and take you out."

She still shook her head, and the baby let out a little yelp. "See, now," she said severely, "You've upset Baby."

"Sara," I said unscrupulously, "the only way I can take you out tomorrow night will be if I break an engagement with a woman whom I considered, until I met you, the most beautiful woman in all England."

"Cool!" she said, and I thought she wavered.

"Would you like to know who she is?"

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This time she nodded eagerly.

"If I tell you, will you think it over — having dinner with me?"

She hesitated. I knew I was being unfair and pushed my advantage.

"Lily St. John!" I said impressively, hoping to be believed.

It was quite true that I did think Lily St. John the most beautiful woman in England — far more beautiful than the complacent Diana Wynyard — but not only did I not have any appointment with Lily St. John, but it was an issue of grave doubt whether my very existence had ever been called to her attention. But I figured that no matter what this child's reasons were for fearing to make an assignation with me the chance to tell her friends that she had displaced Lily St. John in the affections of an American reporter would prove irresistible to any nursemaid in the United Kingdom.

It worked. She told me the name of her employer — a name not wholly unfamiliar to me. He was a barrister who was occasionally mentioned in the news of the law courts. This whetted my curiosity even more. Why should such inconspicuous people fear reporters?

The following evening I presented myself at the back door of a pleasant but unpretentious dwelling in Knightsbridge to call for Sara. I wanted to take her to the Carlton, or some such place where she had never been, but she protested that she would feel uncomfortable. So we settled for the ground floor Gallery of Lyons on the Strand, which she professed to find very grand, and where we also took in an old Chaplin movie which I had

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already seen four times in the preceding weeks.

It was pleasant escorting Sara, because she enjoyed the simplest things; the violets I bought her in Trafalgar Square; strolling through Picadilly Circus past Eros balancing on his graceful toe, in the late Spring twilight, which seems to last forever in England; taking off her cotton glove to hold my hand shyly. She made me feel like a wretch for my concealed motives, and I promised myself to do something nice for her another time. I did, too, but that has no place in this story.

Later, under a tree in Hyde Park, I asked casually how she liked her job and if they treated her well.

The mistress was fair, but the master was a caution, she replied. Then she added thoughtfully, "It's exciting enough, I'll say." Immediately she looked sorry for having said as much. But by this time I knew my Sara. She was transparent as a glass of water.

"Exciting!" I said skeptically, knowing that poor Sara would rise to the bait.

"I suppose you think a nursemaid's post can't be exciting," she said, a little resentfully.

"Well, one would hardly expect it to be so," I temporized.

"You'd be surprised," she said mysteriously, getting quite pink. "Being a nursemaid can be quite as exciting as being a pressman!"

"Now, Sara. You're teasing me. What can be so exciting about being a nursemaid? Babies to tend. Hot milk and porridge. Don't tell me your employer makes love to you!"

"Not he!" she said enigmatically.

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"Who then?"

"It's not that. It's — it's — Well, in the house I work in, for instance — " She paused, and then went on, her voice sinking to a whisper. "We see the Prince!"

"The Prince," I repeated, vastly unimpressed. "Princes are a dime a dozen in London. Since the war every European with a beard and monocle says he's a prince, and most of them are about as royal as you or I, Sara."

Being a truthful girl, she was nettled. "I mean the Prince. The Prince of Wales," she snapped, the color rising in her already pink cheeks.

I whistled. My hunch had been right. I instinctively realized I had been playing on the fringe of an international secret. Sara had been justly scared when I mentioned my ominous occupation.

I was afraid of discretion returning to her rescue. "What are you telling me!" I exclaimed, as if I did not believe her.

"It's true," she insisted, hurt by my incredulity. "He comes at least once a week."

"At least once a week," I repeated thoughtfully. "There must be some very powerful attraction."

"And why shouldn't he come to call?" she said, too airily.

I decided on a sneak attack, hoping to shock her into spilling the whole secret into my lap. "Sara," I said sternly, "are you trying to suggest that the Prince of Wales is the father of that child I saw in the perambulator yesterday?"

She was really horrified. "What have I been saying!" she gasped. "No. No! Believe me, Baby is the real child

of my master and mistress. Don't ever be thinking anything different!" She was badly upset, and I felt more cruel than ever. I was sure she was speaking the truth, but I pretended to doubt her.

"But Sara, the people you work for are not fashionable, or members of the nobility. They're not even in politics. What reason could the Prince have for visiting their house, if not that he's interested in your mistress?"

At this point I delivered myself of a neat little monologue on the differences between royalty and ordinary people like Sara and me.

"Nothing is thought of a prince having a mistress or two. Only when people like you and me misbehave, do people talk."

For some time she could not command her voice. When, finally, she could speak coherently, she said:

"It's not that. It's my master. The Prince is a great friend of my master. They think I don't understand, because I'm a country girl. But I do. And it's fair wicked, that's what it is!" She was excited, her eyes flashing, when she finished. Evidently it did her good to get it off her chest. But then she paused and looked at me fearfully. "You won't put anything about it in your paper, will you? It would hurt the mistress something cruel for people to know."

So now I had the secret. And far from being news, it was something I couldn't possibly print. Even if I were willing to file such a story, assuming that it could be confirmed, there was no paper that would accept it.

I told as much to Sara, to her relief. Her concern touched me. Besides being one of the prettiest girls I

had ever seen, she was kind and unselfish and it had never occurred to her she could make capital out of such a scandal. She was merely afraid of causing pain.

In an effort to reassure Sara further, I told her she was probably mistaken about the whole thing. But if the situation distressed her I thought she should try to find another job. (She did — a much more interesting one, and I was to help her to do it; but that, too, is part of another story.)

It was time for her to be in. She had never before stayed out even so late as this, and she was sure her mistress would be worried about her. So I took her back to the rear door of the house in Knightsbridge and, after arranging another meeting, I kissed her work-hardened little hand and left her.

It was too early for me to feel like going home to my lodgings, and besides, the story I had wrung from Sara was on my mind. It was the first time I had heard such an intimation and it fascinated me. If there were any foundation to it, here was one of those cases—like that of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn — where a royal prince's purely personal and private predilections could affect the course of his nation's history. If Edward were truly a deviate, his marriage and the succession might be at stake.

In search of casual companionship, I dropped into the American bar opposite the Savoy. There I ran into hoarse, one-eyed Floyd Gibbons, the famous correspondent who owned a ranch in Canada where Wales visited. Reflecting that I could not be guilty of an indiscretion because anything that had been told me Gibbons would likely have

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heard, I told him the whole story, omitting the names.

"How long have you been in London?" he asked. Without waiting for an answer he spat, cleanly and resoundingly into a cuspidor fifteen feet away and went on: "Hell, everybody here knows Wales favors the boys."

"I don't see how everybody could know such a thing," I protested. "It would be difficult to prove. You and I know how vicious rumors spread. But you are not a man to engage in spreading rumors. If you say such a thing you must have grounds for it. How did you find out?"

"I was told," he said briefly.

"By whom?"

"Let it go," he growled. "I heard it in high places."

"How high?" I wanted to know.

He seemed to resent my questioning, or perhaps he was annoyed with himself for getting involved in the conversation at all. "There are things you learn in this business that you don't question and just keep quiet about."

"You know I don't gossip," I reminded him, which he had occasion to know. "And in any case, before I could believe such a story, much less repeat it, I'd have to have solid proof."

He turned on me angrily. I could see that he was torn between his feeling for accuracy as a trained reporter and his wish not to discuss the matter further.

"That little girl you had dinner with tonight — you told me yourself she was an honest child, not just trying to build up her own importance with a scandal. Don't you believe her?"

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"I believe she told me the truth as far as she knew it. But, because the Prince visits her master once a week, does it follow that their friendship is anything but a normal one? They could have met behind the lines in France, for instance, when Wales was assisting the Red Cross. Or they could have become friends in school."

He looked at me as if he couldn't believe his ears. "Grow up," he said wearily. "You're perfectly familiar with the Court Calendar. You see it in the papers every day. His time is accounted for, twenty four hours a day and then some. Being Prince of Wales is a full time job, buddy, and you know it. He steps out of his class only when the urge is important to the degree of being irresistible."

"Maybe it's the wife," I insisted. "The girl is very loyal to her mistress and didn't want to consider such a possibility."

Gibbons' one eye lit up with a sardonic gleam. "Maybe it's the wife," he repeated. "Okay, mabe it's the wife. We'll let it go at that."

We did, and for the rest of the evening we talked of other things.

After that I heard other, similar stories, but nothing I ever saw or heard persuaded me that the accepted interpretation of the Prince's conduct was the correct one.

CHAPTER TWO

Sir Edmund Gosse Says: No!

MORE from a feeling of loyalty to my sweet little Sara than out of any discretionary consideration for the British ruling family, I never repeated the tale she told me to anyone at my office. Plenty of gossip came to my ears in and out of bed, and in those idle hours in every newspaper office, between the peaks of furious deadline energy, when reporters hang about smoking, playing cards and exchanging street numbers in the red-light district. (London Mesdames scorn telephone directories as passionately as they embrace the King James version of the Bible.)

It may be noted here, in passing, that Americans in London make notoriously poor expatriates. They but

rarely make an effort to integrate themselves into the life around them. Instead they huddle lonesomely together under a cloak of insularity and usually degenerate into a sort of colony, the burden of whose conversation is a complaint about foreign food and plumbing, and the propensity of Englishwomen to look like angels from head to waistline and like plough-horses the rest of the way. In the case of English cooking, I can hardly blame them, because, outside of the prohibitively expensive restaurants or the little places of Soho, English cooking is surely the world's worst. The classic English recipe is to take a piece of meat, plunge it into hot water and boil it to rubbery tatters. And while the rare, truly beautiful and interesting Englishwomen are incomparable for charm and chic, most of them remind me of their boiled mutton — serviceable, but as unutterly dull as an English statesman's conversation.

But, outside of food and women, the delights of English life are prolific. London itself to anyone who, like myself, loves to walk the city streets, is endlessly fascinating. And an hour's train ride in any direction will take you into the heart of the English countryside which is just as beautiful as England's poets claim. Since I always found so much pleasure simply in being in England, I . . . ed to become bored and annoyed with the constant criticisms and complaints of my colleagues, even though I knew they were based in homesickness. It is wonderful to be an American, but we will all be better Americans when we cease to offer nothing but objections to the culture and mores of other nations. This is no way to make ourselves loved.

My fellow reporters were as guilty as the ordinary tourists, and with less excuse, because most of them had been on foreign assignment in one part of the globe or another long enough to have acquired at least some overtones of cosmopolitanism. But they spent an unconscionable time in playing poker, that most American of games, in finding fault and in gossiping. Wales was a favorite subject for speculation and of course his sexual proclivities were frequently discussed. I would not descend to this sort of men's room chatter, but privately I resolved that if ever opportunity came my way I would attempt for my own information to discover the truth. Even then I could see the possible historical significance of such a story, if true.

Since I was a "feature" writer and not a straight news reporter, I was usually sent on the important interviews with distinguished visitors and local celebrities. I was always glad to get away from the office monotony and when, one day, I found that I had been scheduled to interview Mr. Edmund Gosse, I was particularly pleased.

Gosse was a man for whom the rather pretentious word *litterateur* might have been originated. A sort of Victorian holdover, he was a critic and essayist whom I frequently enjoyed. Besides writing very intriguing little weekly articles for the *Sunday Observer*, he was mainly responsible for an English enthusiasm for Ibsen that made possible the complete translation of the plays of the great Scandinavian dramatist which formed the basis for the modern theatre. For this contribution I revered Gosse. But I had an additional and compelling reason for wanting to meet him — a purely selfish one, con-

cerned with the ever pressing matter of money, which was more important in those days to this young journalist than I now like to remember.

Upon seeing me off on the ship which was to take me to England my friend Edwin Arlington Robinson, the poet, had entrusted me with a note to Gosse. It was not the note of a devout admirer and not calculated to ensure me an immediate place in Gosse's affections. But that I was prepared to risk. The note reminded Mr. Gosse that some thirty years earlier Robinson had sent him a pamphlet of poems entitled *The Torrent and the Night Before*. It was sent him for review but Mr. Gosse, in the course of thirty years, had neither reviewed it nor even acknowledged receiving it. Would Mr. Gosse now, in his great and well known kindness, turn over the pamphlet to the humble bearer of this note, who had befriended Robinson in many ways?

In the intervening years, somewhat through my small efforts, Robinson had become as celebrated in his own way as was Gosse in his. At the risk of making comparisons I believe it would be safe to say that Robinson will be remembered long after Gosse is forgotten. This particular pamphlet had become a collector's item and it fetched from five hundred to a thousand dollars on the rare occasions when it ornamented the auction blocks of the American Art Gallery. Robinson was in my debt and he wanted me to have the pamphlet. Thus it was of considerable importance to me that I get that little note into Mr. Gosse's fist, and my mind was on my own selfish considerations while my chief gave me the usual routine information about the people I was going out

to interview.

"Well, Gosse's just returned from Poland, where they filled him with love of Poles and Polish culture. And I suppose you know that he's also Librarian to the House of Lords and Tutor to the Royal Family."

"You don't say!" I exclaimed.

"I thought you didn't like Poles," remarked the chief, misunderstanding the reason for my sudden enthusiasm.

"I don't," I replied, and was off.

I found Gosse extremely stately and filled with a sense of his own importance. Nevertheless he was very kind to me, even entertaining, and we got on well. He reminded me that, in a recently published article of mine, I had made him the center of interest in an imaginary conversation involving himself, George Moore, Hilaire Belloc, Gilbert Keith Chesterton and Israel Zangwill. Of that conversation, I remembered only that Moore had asked Gosse how he always could tell exactly how much food to have prepared for his literary dinner table, and Gosse replied that if Chesterton was to be one of those invited he counted the number of the guests and then multiplied by two.

"Remarkable that you could know us so well when you had never met any of us. Besides myself, which of us do you know now?" he asked.

"George Moore," I answered, "and Zangwill. Though I'm not always sure that Zangwill knows me. But I'm digressing. I hear you've just been to Poland and I'm interested in hearing about it."

He sighed.

"Poor Poland. It reminded me so much of my visit to

Washington, the capital of your country, two decades ago. Washington was all architecture and no people. Poland is crowded with people and there is practically no architecture."

"Perhaps you place too much stress on the importance of architecture," I commented. "I was born in Poland. I give it to you on the authority of a native that there are a great many trees in Poland. If they lack houses, why don't the Poles live in the trees? I suggest this would be most appropriate and they would look quite at home."

"You don't like the Poles?" he said, as if noting an aberration.

"Let's not dwell too much on my good qualities," I said, "Instead, let's examine this new love of yours. You love the Poles because you've just been there and they showered you with a multitude of attentions. I was born in Poland. I spent the first nine years of my life there. In all that time your beautiful Poles never showed me or my kind a single consideration. To hell with your Poles. But why do you speak so bitterly of Washington? Didn't Wilson smile as sweetly as Paderewski?"

Gosse laughed at me for accusing him of bitterness on the heels of my own outburst.

"I didn't meet Wilson when I was in Washington. That was before his time," Gosse reminded me. "No, my meeting with Wilson was here in London. And, for me, it was an unhappy occasion."

With his permission I took notes on this, and it has never left my mind, the picture he painted was so sordid.

"I was at Buckingham Palace," he told me, "the after-

noon that Mr. and Mrs. Wilson were received by their Majesties, the King and Queen. I had gone there to pay my respects to the man who had come to save Europe and I never saw such a regrettable exhibition of vulgar snobbishness. I saw that man bend the knee before His Majesty in the most servile and contemptible fashion. I watched the President of one of the greatest nations in the world, and his wife, gape their way through Buckingham Palace in a manner that could be forgiven in a pair of Welsh colliers. I said to myself, And this is the man who has crossed the Atlantic to save Europe. Poor Europe!"

"You might excuse the gaping of a foreigner," I chided, "when you consider how familiar you must be with Buckingham Palace."

He looked surprised.

"As a matter of fact, I very rarely go near it," he said.

"Not even as the Tutor to the Royal Family?" I asked.

He let out a startlingly loud guffaw, and I must here record that this was the only point at which I saw him pried loose from his deadly dignity.

"Come, come," he said. "You don't imagine I have the time to tutor children? The title is an honorary one."

"Don't you even supervise their tutors?" I insisted.

He appeared to feel that he might lay himself open to criticism if he did not yield me something in response to this line of questioning. He permitted himself a twinkle.

"If you want to know something about how the members of the Royal Family are educated," he said, "I'll tell you, but you must promise to keep it a dark secret."

"The promises of an American newspaperman are a sieve out of which flow more things than are poured into it," I assured him.

"Then I'll tell you anyway and you may make what you choose of it. The fact is that the son of a colored porter in Alabama has opportunities for a better education than are afforded any boy who is born into the British Royal Family. If you quote me on it, I'll most emphatically deny saying it. But it's true, none the less. An English prince gets the worst of tutors because they are chosen for him by the very worst of judges, the king, his father. Not only that, but he grows up on an allowance that a shoeshine boy on the Strand would regard with the utmost scorn."

"You must be kidding," I said irreverently. And it seemed to me he enjoyed being talked to as if he were a human being, even if he didn't behave very much like one. "How about the Prince of Wales — David, I understand he is called by his family? There is no drudgery written in those queer, cold little eyes."

"Drudgery does not lodge in the eyes, young man," he reproved me. Gosse thumped his great chest. "Here is where it lodges. Don't forget that."

He looked as if he were about to launch into some tale of his own tribulations as a scholar, which would never give me a story.

"Tell me," I said, "is it true that David was a poor student?"

"Not too bad," Gosse said. "Considering his limitations and his poor opportunities."

It amused me to be asked to consider a crown prince

as being one of the underprivileged, but I could see his point. It was certainly not a life I would choose for myself or my son. But I was eager to get some sort of confirmation or denial on the rumors I had been hearing and I felt sure that if Gosse didn't have me bodily thrown out of his rather forbidding house for my temerity he could provide what I wanted.

"What sort of lad was he? Friendly with other boys?"

"Yes indeed; especially devoted to his brothers."

"How about the girls?" I asked boldly.

But he seemed not to understand me. "You mean his sister, his cousins, the women in his family? He was always an affectionate, considerate boy."

"No," I said emphatically. "I mean the girls."

He shrugged at what he seemed to regard as a frivolous question, but yielded a response to American eccentricity. "As far as I know, there are none."

This was dangerous ground on which to tackle a man of Gosse's well known and formidable conservatism. I hadn't yet got around to asking him about Robinson's pamphlet, and I might find myself on the sidewalk before getting around to it, but I plunged ahead anyway.

"Isn't that a trifle odd?" I asked.

He looked at me in blank astonishment. "I see nothing odd about that."

I sighed privately. This wasn't going to be easy, but then, there was no reason for me to expect it to be easy. Gosse was no bohemian. In his stiff black clothing and heavy gold watch chain he looked more like a statesman of the nineties than like an associate of the romantic Chesterton. Also he looked as if he had never heard of

sex. For all I know I introduced him to the subject.

"Look, Mr. Gosse," I said, as persuasively as I knew how. "My readers, right or wrong, are interested in the personal lives of famous people. As a reporter, so am I. It does seem strange that a good-looking young man like David, a prince, isn't besieged by beautiful girls. Even if he's shy as people say and too inhibited to take the initiative, surely girls must try to make headway with him. What keeps them apart?"

He smiled.

"Shall we say the gates of Buckingham Palace?"

I shook my head. "I've seen them. They're not high enough."

"I see what you mean," Gosse said contemplatively, though I was sure he never would have leaped a gate himself. "But it must be obvious that the life of a prince is not like that of an ordinary boy—even a very rich boy. He can see only those who are considered suitable for him. Only those whom, in a very special sense, he wants to see."

"Then your answer would be," I suggested, "that while the girls want to see Wales, Wales doesn't want to see the girls."

He pretended to think I was being jocular, but I thought I heard him groan. In retrospect I think the only reason he didn't order me out was that he feared what I might say of such a dismissal.

"Will you forgive me," he said, at last, wearily, "if I point out that you express yourself a trifle crudely?"

"I'll forgive you anything," I said promptly, "if you'll help me understand the Prince of Wales. Everywhere I

go I meet with the same persistent rumors. I have never repeated them myself, because I think it would be cruel and unkind to do so. I would like to be able to squash the rumors and confound the gossips if they're wrong. This is not idle curiosity with me. I'm a responsible journalist."

He shrugged.

"You're not only a newspaperman, but an American. It is whispered in Fleet Street that not even God, Himself, enjoys so much liberty. How can I prevent you from printing anything you please?"

"You can't," I said, annoyed. "I'm asking you to help me, if it's untrue, to put down a rumor that the Prince of Wales is just a little queer."

"You may say anything you like in the American press," he replied loftily. "But even there, I imagine, such an imputation would sound absurd."

"You insist on crediting me with the desire to make such an imputation," I said. I felt really angry. "Is it because, if you were to answer me truthfully, the answer would be even more absurd?"

Gosse looked deflated. He seemed to shrink. "I will do my best to answer any honest question," he said, in a low, tired voice, "if it is put to me in proper English."

"I want to know if it is true, as is being suggested all over London, that Wales is a homosexual," I told him.

Gosse's face turned white.

I had asked the question in good straight English this time. And the good straight English hurt. He clenched his hands on the big table which separated us, and across which we faced each other.

"I have never heard anything so preposterous or so outrageous in my life," he replied.

"Then you don't believe it?" I pressed.

"Certainly not!" he stormed.

"Would you believe it if you heard it from an unimpeachable source?"

He gained command of himself. "Unimpeachable sources do not yield libel," he said drily.

"You wouldn't believe it under any circumstances?"

"I wouldn't believe it," he said, so solemnly that I had to believe him, "if his mother, the Queen, told it to me, herself."

The idea that Queen Mary could repeat such a story to anyone, the idea that she would even know the meaning of the word homosexual, was so ridiculous that I could not keep myself from laughing.

"Forgive me," I said, controlling myself. I felt a little sorry for him and, feeling that I had punished him sufficiently for his remarks about me and the American press, I changed the subject. "And now we come to matters more mundane," I said, and presented him with Edwin Arlington Robinson's note.

Relieved at being let off the hook, Gosse returned to his grand manner.

"But why does Mr. Robinson want you to have this unimportant little book?" he inquired in a patronizing tone.

"Because," I replied meekly, "this unimportant little book has become rather valuable. If you will read that note carefully, you'll find that it's Robinson's opinion that your failure to as much as acknowledge his poems

has vacated your title in his work."

The elegant scholar and essayist looked interested.

"How much is it worth?" he asked.

I told him.

"That's quite a sum," Gosse murmured thoughtfully. Perhaps the stuff isn't half as bad as I thought it was when it came to me. I'll have a search made for it and if it's found it shall be yours."

I rose to go. My esteem for Gosse had suffered from his last remark. What sort of critic based his judgments on the value at auction of a man's poems? No longer feeling sorry for him, I returned to the subject which embarrassed him so greatly. "One more question on Wales," I said. "May I ask it?"

"You've already offended too gravely for such delicacy," Gosse told me sternly "I should have to hear the question before I would agree to answer it."

"Very well. I want you to tell me in all sincerity what sort of king you expect that David will make."

"If he's alive when the succession comes up, he'll make a wonderful king," Gosse declared piously.

"Why the qualification?" I asked.

"No one else I know is so recklessly careless of life and limb," was the answer. It was not the last time I was to hear this comment. It runs like a melancholy leit-motif throughout the accounts that have been given me of this man who was to become the world's most famous living exile.

"You're thinking of his poor horsemanship?" I asked.

"No. I know something of horsemanship and I don't think his is nearly so bad as you Americans make it out

to be. I'm thinking of his recklessness in actual combat. In the last war there was simply no keeping him out of the fighting. And there are going to be so many more wars."

"You put it down to courage?"

Gosse raised his eyebrows.

"What else?"

"Maybe life isn't as precious to him as it is to you and me."

Gosse tried to dismiss this airily. "Can you think of any good sound reason why it shouldn't be?"

I made him meet my eyes squarely.

"Yes. One very good and solid, juicy reason. His lack of interest in girls."

"Oh," he grunted. "So we're back to that again. Well, as your American phrase has it, that's where I get off." And he led me to the door.

"About the pamphlet —" I reminded him.

"A search shall be made tomorrow, and you will hear from me if it is found," he promised, his hand on his heart.

I telephoned him a month later.

"We've made the most thorough search possible," he informed me. "I must have thrown it out."

I never heard from him again. But the matter did not end with that telephone call, or even with the death of Sir Edmund Gosse, as he was later called. After he died and was buried, his estate published a large, good-looking volume, entitled *The Library of Edmund Gosse*. Catalogued, like everything else, with the most exquisite care is *The Torrent and the Night Before*.

CHAPTER THREE

The Prince and the Blonde Reporter

SOMETIMES it seems this little chronicle might aptly be called *The Prince and I*. Until some public attacks on the Duke and Duchess of Windsor appeared recently, occasioning me to set down these random recollections, it had never occurred to me how many odd irrelevancies concerning the royal progress of a man who is a stranger to me have coincidentally fallen into my lap.

The following tale became mine to tell because I was once employed to do a circulation building feature for a New York newspaper whose managing editor happened to be an intensely partisan Irishman and a friend of

mine. I was on hand to observe his debacle.

Large political differences can cut deep and most unexpected channels into ordinary life. A major historical event of one century can show up in the manners, morals, fashions and jokes of another century and another continent. As witness how the potato famine in Ireland, a result of British colonial exploitation in the nineteenth century, nearly had a disastrous effect on the reputation of the Prince of Wales in the twentieth.

The Irish emigrated to America in thousands because, under English oppression, they were starving. They came to love America and they stayed to hate the English. And they have never ceased to search and find ways to make their hatred felt.

English cruelty has carved the face of Ireland into a mask of tragedy. Irish hatred, in return, lacking the means and weapons to make itself materially effective, has resorted to other subtler methods of attack. The dramas and parables of the great Irish satirists Dean Swift and George Bernard Shaw have done more to change the respectable and hypocritical face of England than could have been accomplished by a legion of armed patriots.

Before the Irish won their liberty and formed the Irish Republic there were always more Englishmen in Ireland than there were emigrated Irishmen anywhere else in the world. The creation of an Irish state covering even the Southern part of Ireland was a major triumph in all ways and it rid the Irish sod of thousands of hated enemies who had been living amongst them. This was

justly celebrated in every Irish heart. At the same time, far away, the Irish were winning what may turn out to have been an even greater victory.

The Irish immigrants to America found ready partisans in a people who still remembered their own sufferings under British rule and the attempt by the English to intervene in our own Civil War on the side of the slave-owning South. And in the growth of the United States, with its traditional love of freedom and its championing of small and oppressed peoples, Ireland gained vast ground in its battle against the English.

Probably there were never as many Irish in America as there were persons of English descent, but it is certain that the Irish became far more articulate and more influential in the formation of public opinion and foreign policy. The weight of Irish opinion was heavily against our entry into both World Wars, and without Pearl Harbor this opinion would most likely have prevailed in the second.

The organization of the Irish in America was both instinctive and intelligent. The politically minded Irish bought newspapers even before they bought bread. And, as they prospered, the Irish became among the foremost owners of newspapers in America, putting themselves in a position to injure England in the public mind at all opportunities, which they sought and sometimes created. In their evocation of the news, love of America and hatred of England became the positive and negative sides of the same medal. They concerned themselves with England's domestic and foreign affairs and sprinkled

into them a poison known only to themselves. It is the finest and subtlest of all such distillations.

Since it is the plain fact, well known to the Irish, that the English — including even their communists — dearly love a lord, wherever it has been possible the Irish have dropped their poison into the lives of the English ruling family. Many persons will recall the assiduous propaganda during the first World War to the effect that the Royal Family, which at that time still bore the German name of Hanover, were pro-German in their sympathies. This sort of attack is effective where others are not. It would profit an Irishman little to convert an English prince to his own way of political thinking since the prince has almost nothing to say about his country's policies, foreign or internal. But if it could, for instance, be publicly proved that he were a traitor, a pimp, or a pander, it would grievously wound the whole nation.

Naturally the Irish, wherever they lived, took an intense and vituperative interest in Edward, from the day of his birth. There's a saying that the Irish, like the tomato-plant, don't transplant well. They remain stubbornly Irish forever. And the Irish-American editors and press lords regarded the then Prince of Wales as a potential usurper and tyrant. Consequently when he prepared to come to New York on his triumphal tour of the world, they got out the axe and sharpened it.

My Irish friend, the imaginative editor of one of the world's largest dailies, who suffered from a thorn in his side, in the shape of a beautiful and very stupid blonde, hatched a plot whereby he figured to rid himself of the

thorn and get the Prince's scalp all in one metaphor.

The blonde had ambitions to become a writer, because her sister had gone on the stage and she, too, wished to distinguish herself in the field of art. The fact that she could barely read and write did not deter her in the pursuit of her simple Grail. The newspaper's owner became so affected by this lovely girl's devotion to the art of Pater and Henry James that he placed her on the editorial staff of his paper, where she became a source of embittered grievance to its editor, whom we shall call O'Murphy, there being no such name in the Manhattan telephone book.

O'Murphy called in the blonde, whom we shall call Cora, because that was not her name. He told her he was going to give her an assignment. Up to this time she had been clipping weather reports from foreign newspapers, and even Cora was beginning to wonder how she would ever get to be a writer this way. Now she was to have an assignment! She took out her notebook, her neatly sharpened pencils and wanted to know where was her photographer.

No, O'Murphy told her, it was not that kind of assignment. It was not writing, it was a man. This was old stuff to Cora and she pouted. When O'Murphy explained that the man was a prince, and promised Cora she could write about it later to her heart's content, she grew more cheerful. "You have heard of the Prince of Wales, haven't you, Cora?" O'Murphy asked doubtfully.

Yes, she had, Cora replied indignantly. O'Murphy must think she was dumb, or something. Not at all, O'Murphy



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answered cryptically. And he spread out his plot. At first Cora demurred, because, though the end was glamorous in the extreme, the means, the immediate aspect of O'Murphy's scheme, required Cora to do some actual real live work.

She had to go to school. "I've been to school," she said plaintively, "all the way through the eighth grade. Mamma made all of us go through the eighth grade. My sister, the one that's in the movies, even had to go one year to high school. Mamma was like that. Crazy about culture."

"That's what you're going to get," O'Murphy told her. "Culture. In great barrels and buckets and gouts."

The fore-handed O'Murphy had already provided himself with Cora's teacher. She was a formidable lady, tall, angular and always clad in long draperies of a musty black. She was related to every royal family in Europe in a more or less distant way, but she was very poor, and so bad-tempered that none of her relations would put up with her any longer. So she was dispatched to America with a little income which she augmented by teaching the daughters of pork barons how to behave when they were presented at the Court of Saint James in the unlikely event that their fathers could buy such a presentation.

Madame S**** conceived an instant and lively hatred for Cora and set out to torture her throughout the term for which Cora was confided to her tutelage. Fortunately, Cora did not recognize the emotion for what it was and thought merely that this was the way royal old babes

always acted. And, since she was committed to the venture anyway, for four months Cora walked, bowed, curts-eyed, pirouetted, swept regally, learned to hold her head high and her shoulders back and how to order her meals in French, never suspecting, to Madame's fury, that she was being persecuted.

Further instruction Madame S**** refused to offer, stating nastily that the only additional help that could be vouchsafed Cora in acquiring a resemblance to a lady would be for God to strike her dumb.

O'Murphy fervently agreed, and it became an integral part of Operation Prince that Cora should never open her beautiful mouth unless it was necessary for purposes of nutrition or vital inquiries such as "Où se trouve le lavabo?" which was one of her French lessons.

Now that Cora could walk, curtsy and not talk, except in French, it was necessary to clothe her. Madame S**** was no help in this department and it wasn't safe to turn Cora loose, naked with a checkbook, in Hattie Carnegie's. So here O'Murphy enlisted the services of his own wife who grimly supervised the apparelling of this exquisite girl in the most exquisite and tasteful of fashions. "She wanted rhinestones on her underwear," Mrs. O'Murphy reported later, "but I made her settle for mink."

Next was the problem of securing for Cora the proper menage.

By a combination of foresight and bribery, O'Murphy had arrived at the conclusion that the Prince of Wales and his entourage would be staying at a midtown hotel

so celebrated that it isn't even necessary to state that it shall remain nameless. Call it the Hotel Nameless, and everyone will instantly know exactly where it is.

Cora was installed in a large suite of rooms at the Nameless. Her mamma, her sister who lived in Flatush, her sister who lived in Queens, and her brother who lived on Staten Island and drove a garbage truck, were all forbidden to come and see her for any reason up to and including a death in the family. This wasn't too much fun for Cora, because it left her nothing to do except try on her new clothes and cut pictures of her other sister out of the movie magazines.

However, soon the great day arrived and with it the Prince of Wales with a modest retinue of only forty or fifty people. As duly foreseen by O'Murphy, Edward and his friends moved into most of the royal suites at the Hotel Nameless and O'Murphy proceeded to the next step of the campaign to entangle the luckless future King of England, Defender of the Faith, etc.

Cora had been living at the Nameless sufficiently in advance of the date of the advent of the Prince so that it required only a moderately vast bribe to see that she was placed each evening at a table near the one reserved for the Prince and his personal staff on the occasions when they dined in the hotel dining room. Cora's table was isolated, it was directly under a chandelier whose soft light shone on her golden head, her dinner gowns were always black and dramatically cut, she was always alone and said nothing except the few words of French she spoke to the captain when ordering dinner, and any

one who didn't notice her would have tripped over the Empire State Building without seeing it.

Someone did notice her.

When Cora was discreetly approached by one of the assistant managers of the Nameless, she was unable to report to O'Murphy whether she had been noticed by the Prince himself, or merely by one of the gentlemen in his party, but to the uproariously happy O'Murphy it did not matter. What mattered was that Cora had been invited to quaff a royal martini in one of the royal suites.

When it turned out that it was Edward himself who had requested Cora's presence, O'Murphy's joy knew no bounds. Cora reported somewhat puzzledly that his Highness spoke very good English and it turned out that she thought Wales was some obscure European country like Graustark. She described him as quiet and as having wonderful manners. No one required her to talk at all. All she had to do was sit and look beautiful and have hors d'oeuvres handed to her. She remembered to take only one cocktail so that she would not be in danger of telling the Prince about her sister, the movie star, or her brother, the garbage truck driver. All went well.

On her third visit, when O'Murphy was almost ready to break his story about the Prince of Wales' Mystery Blonde, Cora received an invitation which stayed O'Murphy's hand. The royal party were proceeding on to Canada and, after the State visits to Ottawa, Quebec and other principal cities, they were going for a stay at a lodge in the Canadian Rockies which was owned and

maintained by the Royal Family. Cora had been invited to join them there.

O'Murphy was prayerfully and reverently grateful. This was more than he had contemplated in his wildest imaginings, and they were wild indeed.

Cora was properly attired for the snowy retreat, again by the glum Mrs. O'Murphy, who held the opinion that she could have carried out the whole assignment as well as Cora, if not better—after all, her best friend had actually been to England and had seen the Prince of Wales in a night club—and Cora duly departed after being briefed by O'Murphy with frantic care. "Keep in constant touch with me," he adjured her. "Let me know the instant Something Happens."

Then ensued—silence.

O'Murphy endured it as long as he could.

He began wiring her daily and then hourly, signing himself either J. P. Morgan or the Duke of Alba. When he got no reply, he could stand no more and flung himself aboard a train for Canada.

He arrived at the village nearest the royal retreat in a blizzard, with the telephone wires down and no one willing to drive him in a sleigh to the royal lodge. He walked. He plodded. He trudged.

Half frozen and nearly dead, he presented himself to a series of butlers. With difficulty he persuaded an equerry to bring him to the Prince's lovely guest. Succeeding in gaining a few minutes alone with Cora, he whispered feverishly, "What's the story? I'm going mad. We're sitting on the biggest royal scandal since Cleo-

patra!"

Looking serene, lovely and regal, Cora placidly replied, "There isn't any story. I'm having a perfectly lovely time, that's all. I never saw so many servants, or such wonderful food. I bet even my sister in Hollywood doesn't have it much better than this."

O'Murphy was pale and trembling. "No story," he muttered through shaking lips. "No story, she tells me. . . ."

"It is a little lonesome," Cora went on pensively. "Hardly anybody talks to me. Mostly I see the others just at mealtimes. But there are lots of movie magazines, one of the maids brought me."

O'Murphy was shattered. "No story," he quavered, heartbrokenly. "Nobody talks to her . . ."

"The Prince is awfully nice," Cora confided, "But he doesn't pay any attention to me, hardly at all. He spends all his time with two dancers—twin brothers they are—you've seen them at the Roxy. Real cute, with shiny black hair. And they're awfully funny. Always making jokes, pretending that they're 'gay'. They make the Prince laugh a lot.

"I'm the only girl here," Cora elaborated. She laughed. "It's the funniest thing. I feel like I'm a sort of chaperone, or something. All the gentlemen just talk to each other all the time. Sometimes I wonder why they asked me. I said something about it to Viscount L**** — he's one of the equerries—" Cora pronounced "equerry" with a careful British emphasis on the first syllable "—and he said something about a beautiful woman for display purposes. I didn't know what he was talking about."

Cora was lonesome and she would have gone on talking to O'Murphy indefinitely, just for company, though she didn't like him. She thought he was crude. But O'Murphy went away.

He didn't know if he had a story or not. If he had a story, he didn't know exactly what kind of story it was. If he knew what kind it was, he didn't know just what to do with it!

He didn't publish it.

He got fired for having spent so much of the paper's money on Cora's education.

What Edward thought of Cora, no one will ever know.

The Irish had been out-maneuvered, but the battle went on.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Plot Against Mrs. Simpson

I WAS in America when the first faint heraldings of the romance of the century began to reverberate in the pages of the tabloid press. Like any one else acquainted with the stubborn attachment the English feel for their customs and traditions, I realized that if only half of what I read and a tenth of what was to be inferred was true an historical international scandal was in the making.

I was not greatly interested and to my mind the matter could well be left exclusively to the tender mercies of the sensational press and the attention of those who live vicariously in the glamorous experiences of the fa-

mous and the wealthy. For an American girl of no great social pretensions to attract the affections of a future King of England was clearly a vision to excite the imagination of any American girl or woman, who must thrive principally on the romances of her favorite movie star, but it was a matter of no special concern to me.

I had felt a mild interest in the Prince of Wales ever since my discovery of the general view amongst the sophisticated of London concerning his sexual proclivities, but since I had never credited this view on the basis of the limited evidence afforded, I found it very little remarkable that a worldly young man should find pleasure in the society of a lady who was, from her photographs, a charming woman.

Naturally the old gossip was revived. It was remembered that Wales was reputed to prefer the company of men and fascinating speculations arose as to the nature of Mrs. Simpson's attractions for him. Some even held that it was her husband who was the real attraction to Wales, and that Mrs. Simpson was merely the front. How false and unkind these speculations were has since been amply proved.

At any rate, it all seemed paltry to me and unworthy of serious consideration. It had not yet occurred to me, in spite of my years of news-gathering, that this romance was any more than an item for the Sunday supplements or the society journals. Thus I was surprised to see reports of the association between Wales and the Simpsons receiving more and more mention in the soberer and more respectable press of America. I began to suspect that there was more in this than merely the interest of

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royalty in a pretty woman who happened also to be an American.

Not since the days of Wales' grandfather, Edward VII, had there been an English prince whose love life had been subject to such scrutiny or attained such notoriety, but with the earlier Edward there had never been any suggestion of departing from the established ways of royalty in such matters, that is: to keep a mistress, a succession of mistresses, or a number of them all at the same time.

The current story was different. Mrs. Simpson was being accorded full honors by the press. She was obviously not a *petite amie*. She appeared to be a woman of the world, sophisticated in the best sense, who would never tolerate any sort of back street designation nor, it was evident, would the Prince accept any such treatment of her from any one.

Thus the story began to interest me. Here was no ordinary liaison, but a genuinely remarkable story of love in high places. And when such journals as the *New York Times* and the magazine, *Time*, began to report on the doings of Wales and Wallis Simpson, it needed no flair for news for me to detect that news was in the making.

When, at about that time, I heard from one of my English friends, who was an editor of one of the large London dailies, besides being a most unusual combination of poet and expert sports writer, that he was coming to New York and wanted to see me, I was pleasantly surprised but didn't dream of connecting his visit with the *affaire* Wales-Simpson. I knew that he sometimes carried out confidential missions between the press and the Gov-



ernment and assumed that it was some political matter that brought him to our shores.

When we met over the lunch table at the Astor, after we had caught up with details of each other's lives and careers, my friend told me the object of his visit, and, to my astonishment, that the object included enlisting my assistance.

"I am a sort of good-will—or perhaps I should say ill-will—emissary," he told me, in his gently sardonic fashion, "from the British Empire to an erstwhile colony. Not since your people had the impudence to throw off British rule, have you Americans caused us so much trouble."

"In what way?" I asked. "Tariff agreements? Competition in world trade? What's wrong?"

"Man, don't you read your own newspapers!" he exclaimed impatiently. "One of your American girls has us all by the ears."

"An interesting story," I agreed, "but surely not the first time a prince has fallen in love with a commoner. The only remarkable aspect is the dignity with which the affair is being treated by our press. And the strong indications which keep coming through that, for the first time, Wales is being made a happy and satisfied man by a persuasive woman who has both charm and character."

"You have expressed the whole difficulty," he told me. "It is surely no secret to you that the Government and the Royal Family have long been gravely concerned over the refusal of the Prince of Wales to accept any of the matches that have been proposed for him. Indeed, the

disposal of Wale's affection has long been a source of grief and worry to his family and the King's Ministers." Again, this hint. And this time from one in a position to know the facts. I refrained from comment. My friend went on:

"You must know that the British people have long been expecting Wales to marry. The event is years past due. And now, instead of marrying, he is disporting himself all over Europe with a woman who is not only not British, but is a commoner and an American."

I must have smiled, because he looked at me sharply.

"I don't wonder that you're amused. And I don't wonder that the subject has been taken up with enthusiasm by your press. For a democratic nation it is a salty jest for the kingdom you threw off to be turned completely awry by one insignificant American girl."

"Not so insignificant," I pointed out, "If you have travelled all the way from England to talk about her."

"There is the crux," he said. "At home we have succeeded in keeping the affair quiet to an extent you would not believe, when it is such common knowledge here in America."

"I can believe it without difficulty," I said, somewhat drily, being well acquainted with the connection between Government and the British papers.

"It is necessary to keep it quiet," my friend insisted emphatically. "With international tension at a peak, it would be unsettling in the extreme for the British people to be informed of Wales' behavior. I am here to request the American press to aid us in soft-peddalling this affair until it blows over."

"Isn't such a task usually the duty of the Ambassador?" I asked.

"Theoretically but not in practice. Your newspapers have a dark mistrust of anything that to them resembles any form of censorship. For the last few years any bulletin from the British Embassy has been looked on with suspicion in the offices of your papers. Just a hint from his Lordship, and all measures to accomplish the effect opposite to the one he desires are promptly planned and executed."

"But surely," I argued, "where it is a question only of scandal, and not of legitimate news, this perversity you describe could hold true only with regard to the sensational press of the Hearst genre. Our responsible press is always ready to cooperate, I'm certain, when it's not a question of denying the public what it has a right to know. Why should your government be scared by our tabloids and Hearst papers? The English people don't read them, and you could easily suppress the few copies which manage to get into England."

"The situation is not as simple as you make it sound," said my friend, the poetical sportsman. "You're overlooking the thousands of British business men and private persons who circulate freely between England and America. One day in your country, and they become frightened and outraged and start writing home to friends and relatives that the Prince they regard so fondly is not just having a scandalous love affair with an American woman and giving the American papers a Roman holiday, but that he's going to marry the woman! We are receiving thousands of demands that

the British public be informed of the facts and that the American press be restrained from treating them so sensationally."

"I see that you have a dilemma," I said. "Have you a plan? And what connection could I possibly have with such a plan, if you have one?"

"The plan is a very simple one," he said, "and you can be of great assistance to me. No power in heaven or on earth can take a story away from the sensational American press, once it has sunk its teeth into such an immensely profitable scandal. The only thing left for us to do is to impose a new angle on the story, an angle that will take the public pressure off the Government."

"And the angle?"

"Let your newspapers continue to unfold the story as your reporters continue to gather the facts. I don't know how we could stop them if we tried. But why should Mrs. Simpson be immortalized as if she were a classic heroine, when she is no more than a clever and scheming woman, who has managed somehow to gain the sexual confidence of a man who has always feared women?"

I was startled. "Is that your opinion of Mrs. Simpson?"

"It is the opinion of all who are closely acquainted with the situation," he replied firmly. "It is an accepted fact that Wales has never had a normal relationship until he met Mrs. Simpson, who exerts such a powerful fascination over him that he has given up his former pursuits. And such is his gratitude to the woman who brought this about, that he swears he will never leave her."

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"I know nothing of this situation," I said. "I cannot question the accuracy of your information. But in any case, I do not see how what you tell me can redound to the discredit of Mrs. Simpson. It would seem that she is a public benefactress."

"Mrs. Simpson is a snob and a social climber," he declared energetically. "The friends and associates with whom she surrounds Wales are undesirables. Some of them have Fascist sympathies. And he is so besotted with adoration for her that he sees no further than the end of his nose—or hers. Your press is treating the affair as if it were the romance of the ages. As if you had a royal family of your own and Mrs. Simpson were its princess. As if her seduction of Wales were the prelude to a union of dynasties."

"Without necessarily agreeing with your conclusions," I said, "I begin to see the nature of your difficulties. What can I do to help you?"

"Look at the facts," he said strongly. "Mrs. Simpson is an American woman, but has she ever shown any pride in being an American, that you should all exalt her so?"

"I do not know that she has failed to show such pride."

"Indeed she has. She is almost a professional leader of the international smart set, which regards itself as being above national ties and as being, to all intents and purposes, without a country. Its capital is Paris and its playgrounds are the French and Italian Riviéras. They go bear-hunting in Hungary, skiing in Switzerland and occasionally condescend to shoot in Scotland. And they pride themselves knowing nothing of the lives of people in any of those places. They speak only to each

other in a language only they understand. For my part, I would not wish to share either their language or their rituals."

I was forced to agree with his appraisal of what a more earthy friend of mine once called "the international white trash."

"This is your Mrs. Simpson," my friend declared. "She has no association or identification with her own country. She is an arch-snob and an adventuress and deserves to be exposed. It is the business of your press to give her her just deserts by showing her up for what she is."

"And how would this benefit the English people?" I asked cautiously.

"If the truth were told about Mrs. Simpson," my friend said, "your papers would not need to relinquish their precious scandal. In fact, it would be even juicier. And the British people would be relieved of their intense anxiety. The impossibility of a union between Wales and Mrs. Simpson would be demonstrated to the Americans and they would stop pushing for this absurd marriage."

"You think, then, that it is the attitude of our papers that constitutes the most alarming feature of the situation?"

"I do," he said. "Conventional, stodgy even, as they are, the British public would look with a tolerant eye on a love affair for their Prince. They'd even enjoy it. But the prospect of his marriage to an adventuress like Mrs. Simpson violates their deepest prejudices. The monarchy may be meaningless to you, but it isn't to the British. It's part of their thinking for centuries and as such they cherish it. So, if your papers will change their tone and

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stop glamorizing this woman, an immense service will be accomplished."

"If what you say about the Prince of Wales is true," I said, "I question whether he will ever be satisfied with the insipid embraces of some Germanic princess in the bonds of an arranged marriage. If you are right about Wales, it must have taken an exceptional woman to break down the behavior patterns of a lifetime."

"Nonsense," he said irritably. "A thing like that can't last forever. There is too much weight, too many factors thrown against it. The important thing is to make the facts about Mrs. Simpson plain to the American public."

"Are you supposed to accomplish this mission alone?"

"No. There are five of us here. Our business is to enlist the help of all of our American friends here to promote the idea. That means the luncheon we have been enjoying has been really a business discussion."

"You compliment me," I said. "But I don't know of another American newspaperman who has less influence with his fellows than I."

He nodded. "I know that. But I also know that you understand your fellow American newspapermen. And that very understanding which makes you dislike each other, can be valuable to me. I'm going to ask you questions about your most important news chiefs and hope that you will advise me how best to win them to my point of view."

"With the responsible editor of one of our really great papers, you have only to show him the facts," I promised. "He'll publish them. For my part, I'm a disinterested observer of your innocuous Prince, and the attachment

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you English feel for your Royal Family seems to me rather absurd. But I understand it, nevertheless, and I agree that there is already so much unrest in the world that any breakdown in the status quo—however foolish it may be—is thoroughly undesirable."

He smiled. "Perhaps I agree with your reasoning more than you would expect. At any rate I'll be grateful for your help."

I proceeded to put my friend in touch with the proper persons in order for him to place at their disposal any facts in his possession about Mrs. Simpson. Whether or not they were disparaging was not my responsibility.

The results were something less than negligible.

One "insignificant" American girl shook the British Empire as it had never been shaken before. Whatever the background, whatever the source of Mrs. Simpson's powerful charm for the Prince of Wales, no pressure, public or private, could prevail against it.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Portrait the Prince Rejected

THERE'S a saying in England that an English potato takes twice as long to grow as any other, and tastes only half as good when it's done, but still it's the best potato there is for human digestion. This homely saying is somehow expressive of the English people as a whole. Their affections are slow in developing, and even when they become fond of one, the taste is a little bitter. But their affections are abiding and English friendship is solid fare.

And, contrary to a somewhat general impression, they are not always ungrateful. Small as my assistance to my editor friend had been, he valued my efforts. And not long after his return to England he cabled me, asking

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if I would like to come to London and do a series of special articles for his paper. I was busy correcting proofs on one of my books and doing research in the preparation of another. But a paid trip to London always appealed to me and, in any case, the biggest news story of a generation was developing there, in the fast moving drama of Wales and Mrs. Simpson. It needed no more than a phone call for me to obtain an assignment from a news agency to cover the story in London, so it was well worth my while to go.

I sailed for Southampton the following week.

The ship I sailed on was a British one and the majority of the passengers were English so I had a good opportunity to sample public opinion, though I was somewhat restricted, since the good offices of my friend had placed me at the Captain's table—a favor I did not appreciate, since there was too much sameness among my companions at mealtimes. But at other times I strolled the decks and even went below to second and third class to hear what people had to say.

I was astonished to find what change in sentiment was coming about in the attitude of Great Britain toward the next in line for the throne. When I had last been in England the feeling about Edward had been one of warm affection mingled with the mildest and most tolerant sort of criticism. He was not thought to be the brightest boy in a contest of wits, nor yet the steadiest man on a horse. But he meant well, and what more was required of the heir apparent in a constitutional monarchy?

But Wales' blundering insistence on forcing Mrs. Simp-

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son down everyone's throat, what appeared to be his determination to show his loyalty to her at all times, in contravention to what was expected of him, had undermined the confidence of his most stubborn wellwishers.

There was a very lovely woman aboard, Lucy Gailard, with whom I had been close friends in my early days in London. It was pleasant for us to renew our old acquaintance, though Lucy was married now to a member of Parliament from one of the shires. Lucy was a mature and sophisticated woman, with a tolerant eye for almost every kind of human foible and frailty. So I asked her what she thought to be the reason for the resentment toward Edward one detected on every hand.

She laughed. "I thought surely you were familiar enough with the pattern of English middle-class thinking to understand this manifestation. Until now Edward has behaved in a completely conventional and comprehensible fashion. Even his departures from standard have been standardized. On the surface, at least, they have seemed to be no more than the few wild oats sowed by any privileged young man."

"True," I said. "And now?"

"And now," said my wise and charming friend, "he is displaying the most shocking tendency a middle-class Englishman can be guilty of—and of course you know the Royal Family is hopelessly middle-class. That's why they're so popular. And Edward is violating the number one rigid rule and tenet. He's showing an inclination to think for himself."

She spoke the last words in a dark tone, as if she were describing the most evil of crimes. "Even worse than

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that," she went on meditatively. "He is feeling for himself. And you know, no English gentleman is permitted to do that. Feeling for a dog or a horse, yes. For a woman, no."

This was my private opinion, but I never would have been so rude as to voice it to an English person.

"You mean," I questioned, "that this public display of emotion could be thought in doubtful taste?"

"Exactly so. Divorcee, succession to the throne, fiddlesticks! What's upsetting everyone is the possibility that Edward may wind up by choosing for his wife the woman he wants to go to bed with more than he wants anything else in the world. And this is altogether too naked and unashamed for the British. It's almost Latin. And it undermines every peaceful, hypocritical standard of conduct that we all live by."

"This can't be tolerated," I agreed.

"Of course not. The nation would topple. Assault the fortresses of a nation, but not its prejudices. At that, I think the English would have taken Mrs. Simpson more calmly if she had not had the effrontery to insist on being always correct. Her appearance and behavior are impeccable. She has never been unchaperoned. And—worst of all—during most of the time that she has employed in enslaving our future ruler she has had her husband around!"

"For obvious reasons," I commented.

"Perhaps," Lucy assented. "But those obvious reasons you speak of are not the ones that have so completely got the British goat. This goes deeper than a mere snub to British pride—it's a real attack. The cool suggestion

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offered by this maneuver is that, even should the lady fail in capturing the British monarch, she would be able to find solace in the arms of a lowly American commoner. This is a thought which is simply not to be lived with!"

I laughed. She was so completely right. As an American this never would have occurred to me. By now the campaign with the New York newspapers was beginning to show a little effect. Less palatable details about Mrs. Simpson were commencing to appear in print. Her extravagance was rumored. It was suggested that she was rude and overbearing to servants, that she attempted to pare the Prince's budget by cutting down on the little comforts of the household staff.

I mentioned these rumors, adding that, if true, they suggested that Mrs. Simpson wouldn't be a bargain for even a British commoner.

"Too late," Lucy said sagely. "Even if the Prince himself should decide that Mrs. Simpson is a dressed-up fishwife, he is hopelessly enmeshed in the Byronic legend he has created—and you know what the British did to Byron."

"Of course. They exiled him for romantic conduct, unbecoming to a peer and a gentleman. Lucy," I said, "How would you feel about undermining some of those peaceful and hypocritical standards you were talking about, a while back?"

"My friend," she replied, "the blue hour is upon us. Let's go and have a cocktail."

* * *

The Prince's side of this war between himself and



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stubborn tradition was fought passionately and badly. He found a hundred petty trifling and irritating ways of impressing on the British public his determination—which seemed to me immature to the point of adolescence—to be granted his personal freedom. He went so far in his demand for privacy as to order the list of his activities deleted from those of the Royal Family daily scheduled in the newspapers. A small thing, perhaps, but it was felt as a slight.

For his own social activities he turned more and more from the respectable and probably stuffy functions he was supposed to attend, and caused the *Tatler* and the other society journals to sniff by appearing everywhere with a group of friends who were more entertaining than blue-blooded. Some hinted that this was because the Gartered and ermined peerage refused to meet Mrs. Simpson, but whatever the reason, Wales' associates closely resembled what is now known as cafe society. He may even have begun it.

I wandered into the Palladium—the great vaudeville theatre—one night, with an hour or two to kill before a party where I was to have the privilege of meeting Augustus John, whose painting I admired, and there was Wales, down in the center of the stalls, surrounded by his modish friends, not one of whom, I was instructed by the awestruck lady in the seat next to mine, was the possessor of a title. Mrs. Simpson was not in the party, and my well-informed neighbor told me she was ill with a sinus attack. I wondered how the lady knew so much, since she was clearly not a member of Court circles. "I follow the Family," she told me dreamily, without my

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asking her. "It's a proper shame, it is, the way that boy behaves. His mother must take on something awful."

The picture of Queen Mary "taking on something awful" was as unlikely as could be conjured — as if one of the Trafalgar Square lions were to weep. I unobtrusively changed my seat to avoid being further enlightened and later, since I was alone, a few minutes before the final curtain was to ring down, I left, and made my way from the darkened theatre in order to miss the rush which would follow.

Evidently the Prince and his party must have done the same thing a moment or two earlier without my having observed them. Because, as I was crossing the great thoroughfare which separates the Palladium from Piccadilly Circus, I was astonished to come upon the entire group huddled, as if frozen, in the very middle of the street. They were being subjected to a very severe heckling from a woman in a rough coat and a brown tam-o-shanter who must have come from Wales. Her accent was so strong as to make her nearly unintelligible, but she was forceful enough, and she was scolding the Prince for the plight of the Welsh coal miners and their families — as if he had anything to do with it!

He's a small melancholy-appearing man, anyway, and he looked totally miserable and helpless under this barrage. None of his friends seemed to have any notion of what might be done. Neither did I, because the woman's complaints were genuine enough, even if misdirected, and if they were not, who can deal gracefully with an angry woman?

Nevertheless the Prince and the others all looked

THE PORTRAIT THE PRINCE REJECTED

woebegone that, half in sympathy and half in scorn, I spoke to him. "Need any expert assistance?" I asked him.

He turned to me.

"You're an American, aren't you?" he asked.

"Sure thing," I said.

"I thought so," he said, a little sharply, as if relieved to have a target for what must have been his frustration.

I didn't particularly like being identified that way as an American, as if it could account for anything from bank-robbery to picking one's teeth, so I said, rather unkindly, "You know us Americans — always standing by, ready to help a lady or an Englishman in distress."

It was flippant of me and I was sorry, but before I could indicate this in any way he turned quickly, gestured to his entourage and they all walked rapidly away in the direction of St. James's.

I doffed my hat to the heckler and got in a taxi to go to St. John's Wood, that lovely Georgian suburb of London where the party to which I had been invited was being held.

It was a delightful party. It was a pleasure for me to meet the craggy, rough-hewn Augustus John and to be able to tell him of my honest admiration. So often one is embarrassed by meeting artists whose persons one detests. There were other effective artists and writers present and the talk, while agreeable, was serious and devoted chiefly to art and literature. It was a welcome relief after the endless gossip about The Great Scandal I had been listening to ever since my arrival in England.

Since there had not been even a mention of the Prince during the entire evening, when I heard my host say,

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Since there had not been even a mention of the Prince during the entire evening, when I heard my host say,

"Good evening, David, it's so nice you could come," I didn't even turn my head. And I was unutterably startled a few minutes later to see that "David" was Wales. There was little formality at this gathering, no bowing or curtsying and Wales behaved like any other guest, though he seemed a little morose.

When I was introduced to him, I attempted to apologize for our earlier encounter, but he smiled a little, and waved my apologies away, and the whole evening might have slipped my mind, beyond the casual interest aroused by meeting the center of such a world-wide storm, had it not been for a bizarre little incident which unaccountably has stayed with me.

For the whole time that he was there, Wales sat on a divan flanked by two young men, identical twins, a pair of vaudeville dancers and night-club entertainers, of whom I had heard as being constant companions. They were sleek, dark-headed young men, with a penchant toward a sly and cutting humor which was not to my taste. They appeared to look on every one else as being outside a charmed circle in which they, and they alone, were the privileged initiates and their occasional drawled witticisms were nearly always at the expense of someone too polite to reply. I was surprised that Wales should bother with them but reflected that he never had been noted for being very bright and this pseudo-sophistication was probably a novelty to him and provided a pungent contrast to the atmosphere he had grown up in.

Like the other guests I preferred to ignore the intrusion of this odd element and we would have done so successfully had not Wales forced them on our attention in

a somewhat peculiar way.

Someone had suggested that it would be an admirable notion for Wales to sit to Augustus John for a portrait. Wales courteously replied that it would be an honor for anyone to have his portrait done by John, but that he didn't regard himself as a particularly good subject for John's bold style. John said something equally polite and meaningless when suddenly it was observed that another artist who was present — one almost as well known as John himself — was sitting in a corner quietly sketching the Prince.

"It's probably lese majeste," the artist remarked, "to sketch a Royal Highness without his permission," and at a request from the Prince he handed the drawing over for inspection to Wales who looked as if he rather agreed with the artist's comment.

Wales studied the sketch for quite a long time. Then he said: "With your permission, I should like to purchase this."

The artist said mildly: "It's only the roughest sort of scrawl. I couldn't possibly let your Highness buy it from me. But if you'd care to keep it, I'd be delighted to give it to you."

Wales' next words were a jolt. He looked at the artist with a strangely sad expression. "I haven't made myself clear," he said. "I don't want to keep the sketch. I want to buy it so I can destroy it. I could hardly do that if I accepted it as a gift."

"Destroy it!" the artist exclaimed.

"You've caught me admirably," Wales said quietly. "I don't care for the portrayal of my friends."

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By craning my neck painfully I managed a look at the drawing in the Prince's hand. With quick careless strokes, the artist had caught, not just Wales' fair head, but the dark ones of his companions on either side of him, the sly and supercilious intimacy of their smiles, their glances directed on the Prince. But remarkable as was this swift dissection of the two dancers, the study of the Prince himself was even more so.

I thought him a rather ordinary looking man, distinguished only by the perfection of his highly trained manners.

But in this sketch the artist had caught an expression of the utmost world-weariness, a sadness so consuming that it wrung the heart. I thought back to what Lucy Gaillard had said, aboard the ship which brought me to England. "... hopelessly enmeshed," she had said, "in the Byronic legend he has created. And you know what the British did to Byron . . ."

I wondered if we were looking on a young man who was hoist on his own petard in a truly pathetic way. A young man who was a victim of heroic legend which he himself had made and which was too big for him. I wondered . . .

The two dancers smirked. The artist reached forward, took the drawing from the Prince's hand and tore it up. That was all there was to the incident.

CHAPTER SIX

An English Doctor Speaks his Mind

IN SPITE of myself I was growing interested in the Royal Scandal. When I reproached myself for engaging in small-minded gossip, I was forced to reply that, after all, it was my job to do so. I was being paid to tell the American public all I could find out about the romance of the century — although, in truth, since my encounter with Wales, he looked to me more like a woefully troubled, slightly middle-aged boy than a figure in a historical drama. For the English paper I was doing a series, which I kept as temperate as possible, on how the situation looked to an American, and for my American papers I was doing the same thing, only with

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a broader and more satirical tone.

But inevitably, going about as much as I did and meeting so many diverse people, I was finding out more than I had bargained for and a great deal more than I could print.

I say "finding out" which is not strictly accurate. I didn't necessarily believe them. I certainly wouldn't print them, or even hint at them. The British paper wouldn't have accepted such innuendoes and my own taste and conscience wouldn't have permitted me to expose the Prince, in the American newspapers, to the kind of attack I heard made on him constantly. If it were true that Wales were a homosexual, which I saw no reason to believe, I regarded it as a medical and psychological misfortune which he himself was forced to bear, and not anything to occasion public comment and reprobation.

Because of my dispassionate attitude toward sexual deviation, widely at variance with the customary hypocritical view taken in England, where the incidence of homosexuality is enormous and ignored, I found myself being forced at times into a reluctant partisanship. It was an absurd position. I was defending a young man whom I did not know, except by sight, and cared little about, against charges I didn't believe and had no interest in.

The people at large were genuinely frantic to discover some motivation beyond the most inexcusable self-indulgence for the Prince's reckless determination to defy his father, the Church and the State and his own loyal subjects by marrying a woman who was not royal, was American and was in the process of obtaining her sec-

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ond divorce. The man in the street simply thought the lad was out of his mind about the woman and, for all I know, some may have suspected witch-craft.

Amongst the people I knew, the English Intelligentsia, the popular explanation was that offered me by my editor friend as being the one accepted in official circles — that the Prince was a lifelong, practicing, if unwilling, homosexual and that for the first time he had met a woman whose sexual powers were such as to permit his entry into the world of normal expression. And that his gratitude for this great gift of sexual normality was so intense and the dependency created so overwhelming that Wales could not face the possibility of losing Mrs. Simpson. The proponents of this theory took the further position that Mrs. Simpson, knowing the extent of her power over Wales, was blackmailing him into marriage with the threat of leaving him, under the heavy paranoid delusion that the British people, the Royal Family and the Government would accept her as Queen.

The artists, writers and such, whom I knew, had not been told this theory by any member or associate of Government. Rather they took it — and then dispensed it with enormous zeal and inaccuracy — from a prominent Mayfair psychiatrist who had once been so injudicious as to mention at a party that this was his opinion of what he called the Wales-Simpson Phenomenon.

Since the word of a psychiatrist is the modern version of the tablets handed down to Moses, this theory was soon all over London and being regarded as undisputed fact. I could not agree that this interpretation should be accepted as doctrine. One day I was lunching at the

Ivy, the famous gathering place for show folk and the literati, when this psychiatrist, whom I shall call Dr. Werther, came in and joined our party. Someone thought fit to present me as differing from the doctor, a distinction which I quickly disclaimed, since I was certainly not qualified to hold a medical opinion. I added that I thought it a pity to annihilate the reputation of a harmless young man, who was already in so much hot water, on such flimsy, suppositious grounds.

The psychiatrist ran his hands through his luxuriant, soft brown beard and looked at me sharply from under shaggy brows.

"God save me," he sighed, "from ever venturing a professional diagnosis in public again. It was most thoughtless of me. But still — the facts, the facts . . ."

"What facts?" I prodded.

"Let us say, rather, the indications." Then, abruptly, he rose, and I thought he wished to terminate a discussion which was evidently embarrassing to him. But before he left, he invited me to come to tea one day. Surprised but intrigued, I accepted, although it meant travelling down into Surrey on Sunday, which was, for me, a working day.

Dr. Werther lived in a charming Queen Anne cottage in the country surrounded by flowers. One could not imagine a more wholesome environment. But I was admitted to a more exotic atmosphere. In addition to his magnificent beard, the doctor was the possessor of a daughter who was one of the most fabulously beautiful young women I have ever seen, and, from their behavior toward each other, it would have been difficult not to assume that she was

also his mistress. Their open gestures of physically expressed affection were lover-like in the extreme but, due perhaps to the doctor's absolution from conventional standards, they were so natural and free from shyness that my fascination and embarrassment soon wore off.

The tea was excellent and the sherry better. Soon the beautiful daughter retired and left us to our cigars.

"I am regretful," Dr. Werther began, "for the wide credence which has been given a casual remark of mine. Since I attach no onus to what I offered as merely a matter of scientific observation, it did not occur to me in time that others would take up my words in such a serious spirit of criticism. I deserved your censure, and that is why I asked you to come and see me."

"There is no need to apologize to me," I said.

"You are an American journalist, and in a position to give even further circulation to my hypothesis," he said. "I want to ask you not to do so, and at the same time to explain my apparent irresponsibility."

"I have refrained from circulating this notion," I told him, "first, because I see no reason to believe it and second because if I did believe it, nothing but harm could come from spreading it abroad. There is already enough unkind gossip."

"Of course," he agreed, "and I am sorry to have contributed to it. Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that my theory is correct. Everything supports it."

"I have heard a great deal," I said, "about the Prince's alleged unnatural conduct, but nothing to convince me. On the basis of what I have been told, you could make out a case of homosexuality for any normal man who is

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particularly fond of the sports or hobbies in which male society predominates."

He waved his cigar impatiently. "Normal!" he said. "There is a homosexual component of greater or less degree in all so-called 'normal' men. And these sports and hobbies you speak of contain a very strong element of latent homosexuality. Show me your bluff, hearty two-fisted he-man, who is always punching either a bag or a fellow human, or chasing some kind of ball, vaunting his masculinity and disdaining feminine society, except for his most primitive needs — and I will show you a man with a strong and deeply repressed longing for his own sex."

I was amused, and said that his description could apply generically to the British upper class male.

He agreed emphatically. "And in some cases the latent longing breaks through and becomes overt — as in the case of Wales."

"You would say, then, that all typically 'masculine' pursuits indicate the repressed homosexual?"

"I would."

I thought to tease him a little, and said, "How about the most ancient and typical of all masculine pursuits — whoring?"

"That's a horse of a different color — if you'll forgive a bad pun." He grinned. "And have you ever heard that whoring was one of the Prince's particular interests?"

"No," I admitted, having fallen into a neat trap — my own.

But I was there, not to best the doctor in an argument, supposing that I were able, but to get his view

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point, albeit it seemed to me a warped one.

"Let us assume that your measure of the Prince's dilemma is the true one. How did you arrive at it?"

"By deduction, naturally. I think there is one quality in Edward which has never been disputed — that is his patriotism. And what, I ask you, must be the first consideration in the mind of an heir to the throne but the awareness that he must some day, in his turn, marry and produce another heir, if his dynasty is not to die out and his country thereby to be left in turmoil. As would be the case in a king-loving country such as England."

"Perhaps," I objected, "Edward is only phenomenally difficult to please."

"Abnormally so, without doubt. No other presumptive King of England has been so difficult to please. Remember Henry the Eighth and his German princess? 'The things I do for England!' No, that won't wash. All you have to do is look at the faces of women these unfortunate kings have married, to be convinced that they put country ahead of self. And I am sure that Edward would have done the same if he had been able. But your true homosexual cannot force himself to have intercourse with a woman. It is a physical agony and an impossibility. Too many of my patients, under the pressure of the expectation of family and society, have tried to fill the masculine role, with resulting pains and humiliations that are very severe."

"How about Edward's success with Mrs. Simpson?"

"She must be marvellously patient and skillful. There is also the outside possibility that they find means of gratification other than the usual ones. Though I think

otherwise."

"As I reflect on what you have been saying," I remarked, more to draw him out further than because I was impressed with his reasoning, "it occurs to me that the Prince hardly squares with your picture of the bluff, masculine repressed homosexual. He's rather a little fellow, and apparently quite timid. Never very successful at games and always falling off horses. And devoted to his sister and his mother."

But I had merely trapped myself again.

"Did I suggest," Dr. Werther said serenely, "that the Prince is a repressed homosexual? I did not. I am drawing you the portrait of an overt one. There is no doubt that Wales has a strong feminine identification, and that it is only with great effort that he can think of himself as a man, or feel like one. He has never been good at these dreadful games and he hated and feared the rigorous discipline and harsh regime of that uncivilized Naval Academy he was forced to attend."

"I have heard," I said, "that he detested the hard cots, the cold baths, the voyages through the North Sea in winter weather and all the other hardening routines he was subjected to. And that the only reason he submitted was because of the insistence of his father, King George, of whom he was in mortal terror."

"There you have it," the doctor exclaimed decisively. "There lies the root of the whole abominable difficulty. These idiot Anglo-Saxon fathers subscribe to the idiot Anglo-Saxon tradition that to betray any softness or affection for their sons is a sign of weakness. Catch them embracing their sons, like a French or Italian or Viennese

father. They would consider it a disgrace. And they despise all men who show a normal and intelligent sensibility as 'foreigners', there being no worse appellation."

"Then," I ventured cautiously, "you trace the Prince's alleged deviation to his treatment from his father?"

"Of course," he replied, somewhat impatiently. "Denied the smallest indication of love from the stern parent he adores, and seeing it lavished on the little girls of the family, the little boy quite naturally concludes, in an area of his mind obscure to himself, that the way to get that love is to be like a little girl. Told always that he must assume this hateful Anglo-Saxon task of 'being a man' the poor child rebels and, quite unconsciously, determines to be a woman. It's quite simple."

It appeared to me that the doctor was, if anything, over-simplifying. Still, there was some plausibility in what he offered, though his explanation seemed far too glib and pat to cover all the factors that must go to produce a sexual deviate.

"But the Prince has succeeded quite notably, in some departments at least, in 'being a man' as you put it. No one can question his personal bravery. Just look at his war record."

Dr. Werther dismissed this. "Women can be brave," he pointed out, with complete justice. "Wales' war record merely underscores the guilt felt by every homosexual. He was always trying to get himself killed. You must remember that every homosexual is basically unhappy."

"Why?" I asked. "Outside of society's disapproval, why cannot he accept himself as an ordinary human being?" I knew, from observation that this was not so,

but I wondered what Dr. Werther would say. He seemed so sure that he knew all the answers. Sure enough, he came right up with one, all packaged, ready for delivery.

"You underestimate the weight of society's disapproval," he said promptly. "Although that is not the root cause. The homosexual is unhappy because all his sexual relationships are based on hostility — a fierce sense of rejection and a desire to conquer the object of his affections, by force if necessary. In the case of the Prince the deep, repressed fury and love he feels toward his father have brought a death wish. Conscience makes him turn the death wish against himself. That is why he has always sought hazardous pursuits where there was a good chance his life might be lost. During the war, he constantly pestered every one in authority with demands that he be sent to the front lines."

This annoyed me. "I can't see that at all," I snapped. "To me, that seems like the perfectly normal behavior of a patriotic young man who was, to put it mildly, humiliated by being kept in areas of safety, while his countrymen were risking their lives and dying by the thousand."

"A disciplined intelligence would accept the fact that his first duty to his country was to stay alive and become its king. Wales was aware of that. He was told it often enough, but he was driven by a suicidal compulsion."

The doctor's stock-in-trade set of cliché answers was beginning to irritate me. "As a newspaperman," I told him, "I know that when Lord Kitchener reprimanded the Prince for his insistence on going to the Front and risking the royal succession, Wales pointed out quite log-

ically that, if he were killed, there would be four brothers left to take up where he left off. He did finally get to the scene of action in France, and he assured his brother, George, and his wife, over and over again, that eventually they would become the rulers of England."

"You are proving my point," Dr. Werther said triumphantly. "Why should he have been so certain he was going to be killed, unless he sought death?"

"If Wales really felt himself unable to marry, it seems quite possible that he may have felt, patriotically, that the highest good for his country would be his death so that his brother might succeed him and England would have a king capable of producing an heir."

"People's true motives are not usually so noble," Dr. Werther said dryly. "It would have been quite wonderful if anyone had had the courage, or the knowledge to point out to Wales that a homosexual can become a father, through artificial insemination if necessary."

"An unlovely thought," I commented. "A test tube monarch."

"But entirely practical," the doctor said. "However I'm afraid the Prince is not a practical person. If he were, surely someone could persuade him that he could quite well achieve what he needs from this wretched Simpson woman without embarrassing his family and his country by marrying her."

"Why do you call her a wretched woman?" I asked, disliking this two-bit Freud more and more. I was sure that the American objections to Mrs. Simpson, which were matters of taste, were quite different from his. "What is more natural than for a woman to want to

marry the man she loves? Why should she submit to any other terms?"

"Don't talk to me of love," Dr. Werther scoffed. "Mrs. Simpson is primarily a woman of enormous vanity. She has never loved anyone but herself. Look at the way she treats that unfortunate husband of hers. She has gone very far indeed for an obscure American woman, and she keeps her husband at her side, not because, in a pinch, she might go back to him, but to remind herself that, no matter what the consequences to Edward or to England, she must never turn back. No. If she genuinely loved Edward, she would sacrifice her ambition for his good and the good of his country."

"You have departed from your scientific detachment," I said, rather acidly, "with this talk of sacrifice. Also, it must have occurred to you that there is no earthly reason for an American woman to share the European's respect for a crown."

"Mrs. Simpson respects a crown sufficiently to want to marry one," he said. Then he sighed, and for once looked human. "As for scientific detachment — one cannot always preserve it."

I thought of his strange relationship with his lovely daughter, and of what he had said of the weight of society's disapproval of departures from the norm, and I supposed that this bearded prophet of a new cult must, like other men, kings and commoners alike, have his troubles.

The effulgently beautiful Miss Werther came back into the room at this point and invited me to stay for dinner, but I had had enough of the doctor and I pleaded ano-

ther engagement. I would have liked very much to invite her out to dinner with me, but under the jealous eyes of her father I was afraid to. Besides, I wasn't at all sure that she would have wanted to go with me. Possibly she preferred beards.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Out of the Woodwork

MOST Americans were vastly exhilarated by the Romance of the Century, the exciting, turbulent almost tragic drama which culminated in the abdication of Edward the Eighth, his marriage to Mrs. Simpson, "The Woman I Love," and the emergence of a pair of new celebrities, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor. Democracy battens from time to time on the legends of modern mythology which spring from the nearly by-gone days of the rule of kings.

Most Americans were pleased by what they looked on as a fascinating Cinderella story, a modern King Cophetua and the Beggarmaid, the victory of an "ordinary"

American girl in winning the heart of a King and persuading him to give up his throne in favor of her charms. What they overlooked, of course, are the facts that the King in question was a stubborn, strong-willed man, who made his choice freely, without undue influence, and that the "ordinary" American girl was a chic, elegant thrice-married expatriate with a voracious passion for dress, jewelry and personal adornment, so out of proportion to the demands of real life that the average sturdily independent American could look on it only as a curious phenomenon.

The almost royal couple were Big News for a while. Their every movement was followed. But as they became respectable, they became dull. No one was interested in the part of the story that followed "they lived happily ever after." As the Duke and Duchess of Windsor settled into domesticity, they settled also into the obscurity of gossip columns and the society chatter. And there — with an occasional flutter when the Duchess did something silly like demanding that she be accorded the curtsy reserved for royalty — most Americans were content to leave them.

Not so a certain obscure journalist who, in the fall of last year, decided to pick a fight with the former king of England.

Historians, present and future, in viewing the decline of the British Empire, will give due weight to the abdication of Edward. Since the British have a royal family they're perfectly satisfied with, it's likely that the bankruptcy following World War II had more to do with the decline than Edward's quitting his job. Perhaps the

English are merely grateful to him for providing them with the juicy scandal of a lifetime.

But this little journalist was not content to leave history to the historians. Trained for his mission in the kitchens of New York restaurants, where he culled recipes with which to fill a column on cooking, in a few articles for a small-circulation magazine which attempts at once to be a bizarre imitation of both *Time* and the *New Yorker*, he undertook to raise his voice against the rather dignified and unpretentious memoirs published by the ex-king.

It is quite true that, in writing his autobiography, the Duke of Windsor gave no mention of the affection in which some said he was held by Hitler, but who could blame him? There is no evidence that he enjoyed or returned it. The *New York Times* of October 23, 1937, commented ". . . There can be no doubt that Hitler, like the German Foreign Office, regretted the abdication as a serious blow to German interest . . . The Duke's decision to see for himself the Third Reich's industries and social institutions and his gestures and remarks during the last two weeks have demonstrated adequately that the abdication did rob Germany of a firm friend."

If this were so, and I find the comment unduly prejudiced and harsh, a staunch anti-Fascist such as the author of these articles professes himself to be should have known only the most heartfelt joy when Edward VIII relinquished his crown. The abdication of a ruler who subsequently was innocent enough to pay a visit to Adolph Hitler and was a dinner guest — no matter how reluctant — at a party given by Ribbentrop, which in-

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cluded Heinrich Himmler, arch murderer of six million Jews and uncounted millions of others, should have made the little recipe-collector happy. But it didn't. Admiringly he quotes from George Wyndham, "The gentlemen of England never abdicate!"

Sternly, though with a loose regard for syntax somewhat characteristic of his more stately utterances, he admonishes Edward for having failed to study his country's history. "He would have found," our upholder of the monarchy tells us, "that when a King of England seemed bent upon upsetting the habits of the Constitution, he got killed, or deposed and exiled, excluding even posterity." Since by definition a habit can be a dress, costume, one's bearing or deportment, or a tendency of behavior — none of these being attributes of a Constitution — the journalist is indulging in a not unusual anthropomorphism which, in the cooking columns, ascribes human qualities to wine and food. As for the latter part of that remarkable sentence, one can only assume that the hypothetical king excluded any and all posterity from being killed, deposed or exiled — a truly Protean feat.

Our author's anthropomorphism turns up again as he describes "literature" as "disapproving" of Windsor. Literature may be read, unread, lauded or ignored, but it cannot disapprove. In the same sentence he gives us more of his fascinating syntax. "... disapproving of him," he says, "for letting down his 475,000,000 subjects in preference to a comely American divorcee ..." Does he mean that the American divorcee should have done the letting down? We may never know.



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But it is as a deep social thinker, not just an empty stylist, that the chafing-dish expert shows his mettle. "In the summer of 1931," he thunders, "Mrs. Ernest Simpson was introduced at Court in a borrowed 'presentation' gown." Perfidy, Mrs. Simpson! Letting down 150,000,000 Americans by not having a presentation gown of your own! What red-blooded American woman doesn't own her own tiara?

At the same presentation, he tells us, "observant people (doubtless himself and some other gourmet) thought it highly significant that Mrs. Simpson wore three ostrich plumes on her head, the three plumes being the insignia of the Prince of Wales." His studies in the pantry evidently had not informed him that no lady may be presented at the Court of Saint James without the traditional three feathers on her head, even if she be an Icelander who has never met the Prince of Wales.

But nearly the greatest offence committed in the eyes of the omelet specialist by Mrs. Simpson, whom he engagingly calls "Wally" in the warm fashion of the film-struck girl addressing a movie star, is that she was born poor. With a genuine E. Phillips Oppenheim feeling for international intrigue he exposes the sinister background of Mrs. Simpson as contained in a dossier on the lady in the possession of His Majesty's Government. She was born, he tells us, with a mild and lofty indignation, "in the most modest house in Baltimore's most modest Eager Street . . . her real name was Bessie and not Wallis."

What a fraud to perpetrate on an unsuspecting prince! Fie! Mrs. Simpson. And what's the idea of being born in Baltimore's most modest Eager Street? Why in hell

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weren't you born in Baltimore's least modest Eager Street, if they have one?

The catalogue of Mrs. Simpson's crimes does not end with her being born poor. Her first husband was poor, too. And she didn't stop there — there was no end to what that woman would do. Even her second husband wasn't very rich. This sort of thing is hard for a serious eater, social historian and democrat to overlook.

But far and away the worst of Mrs. Simpson's outrages, in the opinion of the cookbook compiler, was her lack of proper feeling for the British monarchy. "What a great lady," he mourns, "Mrs. Simpson might have become if she and Edward hadn't persisted on marriage. There were scores of precedents," he goes on, in his august remonstrance, "of kings having mistresses right in Edward's own family."

One wonders if he means that George, Edward's father, maintained scores of mistresses in the bosom of the family home, or if again the writer was being betrayed by his unfamiliarity with common English usage.

These mistresses, the scullery gleaner gravely informs us, "were usually given a high-sounding title, had beautiful estates, their own court around them, plenty of money, and every opportunity to gently steer the amorous sovereign in the right direction."

What an honorable career for a humble American girl to scorn! — a girl whose ancestors had fought in a bloody war to rid themselves of a British king. Where was her sense of propriety, that she should prefer marriage to being the king's mistress and watching another woman bear and rear the children of the man she loved?

The "American" journalist righteously reminds us: "There are quite a few royal mistresses in history who governed, helped to maintain peace, aided the poor, and did all the good work in the background."

How aptly this could describe the life and work of, let us say for comparison, a Mrs. Roosevelt. How typical of the ambition of any normal American girl!

A Mrs. Keppel, of whom our chronicler approves and whom he alleges to have been the mistress of Edward VII, this Edward's grandfather, is credited by him with having been the guardian angel of Europe's peace. He doesn't relate just how she pursued her angelic course, but leaves us to suppose that without her good offices the mild and pleasure loving monarch, her royal boyfriend, would have plunged the continent into warfare.

"She," the purveyor of kitchen bouquets observes of Mrs. Keppel, "was a level-headed woman."

The social skills and the tenacity of purpose with which Mrs. Simpson achieved a marriage which must be regarded as successful in terms of wealth and worldly position leave her critic cold. I have seen less energy expended on what seemed to me worthier aims but it would be difficult to deny that by most standards the Duchess of Windsor is a howling success and only the most abject devotee of a royalty on its way to becoming extinct as a dodo-bird could feel that she neglected her opportunity to become a "great lady."

However our stomach exponent of American democracy, in his effort to show how Mrs. Simpson failed in the allegiance owed by every loyal American to the British Crown, reproves her sharply for not having un-

derstood the meaning of a morganatic marriage and for not liking it when it was explained to her. "Strange, and almost inhuman," she called it. Strange, indeed, for an American woman to wish to be the acknowledged equal partner of her husband in their marriage!

In his energetic disapprobation of Mrs. Simpson's refusal to keep her place below the salt, the stern examiner quotes from an account given by Sir Philip Gibbs of the effect on some younger airmen — an account which I hope is apocryphal. I don't mind Gibb's writing such bad dialogue, but it would distress me to think that these lines originated with any actual young men; they belong in the New Yorker's "Shouts We Doubt Ever Got Shouted" Department.

"He has let us down," they shouted. 'He has thrown up the sponge. He preferred that damn woman to England and the whole blinking Empire. He ought to have held on to his job, even if it meant chucking that wench. Aren't we asked to risk our lives every day for him? For the King and Country, by God! In time of war we should be asked to give up our wives and women for the country's sake; to do our duty and die like little gentlemen. But that fellow wouldn't give a woman the go by — or keep her in her proper place — for the sake of the whole crowd of us."

In their common fealty to the mystic beatitude of kings both Sir Philip and my herb-grubbing little scrivener appear to think that they are back in the tenth century at the court of King Arthur. Modern men fight for their homes and their daily bread, not at the behest of a sovereign, and when they die it is as human beings,

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not necessarily as gentlemen, either big or little. As for keeping Mrs. Simpson in her proper place, that place conceivably might be the bed and board of the man she chose to marry.

That eminent Victorian and great English satirist, W. S. Gilbert, in *Iolanthe*, described the happy condition of the House of Lords during the Napoleonic Wars, saying that they "throughout the war, did nothing in particular, and did it very well," and urges a return to the glorious days when "noble statesmen did not itch to interfere in matters which they did not understand."

It is doubtful if Gilbert reckoned on the disagreement he would meet with, across the water, from my friend the literary potboy. Or perhaps he did, when he wrote about the fools who admire every century but this and every country but their own. For the Pepys of the scullery entertains a great admiration for a most un-American body of noble statesmen known as the one hundred Privy Counsellors, whom he calls the most distinguished personages of the land. Physicists, labor leaders, authors, philosophers, artists be damned! it's lords the little man loves. For the Privy Counsellors comprise what the stew-pot litterateur calls the highest, mightiest, cleverest group — the peers of the realm, standing staunchly behind the throne, where they constitute the bulwark of the nation. One might have thought the coal miners or even the Army to be a more reliable bulwark, but that would be to side against the author and with the whole British people who are partial to the view taken by Gilbert and show an ostentatious preference for being governed by the House of Commons, the Lords having little

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to do except appear on state occasions in velvet, coronets and ermine.

Fortunately for the British Commonwealth the duties of the Privy Counsellors are limited and we quote the nearly inimitable (except by the author of *The Bobbsey Twins*) prose and profound statement on public needs of the cookbook thinker: "Some thirty dukes, thirty marquesses, lots of earls and viscounts, and many barons, together with a score of bishops, stick together to protect morality and religion without which the State would fall apart." One wonders what it is that holds the American State together, deprived as we are of Privy Counsellors.

The arithmetic of the royalty-loving scullion is as weak as his grammar. It's difficult to figure how his "thirty dukes, thirty marquesses, lots (what girlish enthusiasm!) of earls and viscounts, and many barons, together with a score of bishops" add up to only one hundred Privy Counsellors. They sound more like a regiment. One suspects that the little man loves his earls and barons so dearly that he multiplies them. But the warmth of his exuberance for the nobly born really catches him up at another point where he refers to the Duke of Windsor's mother. Snuggling close to the royal bosom he calls her "our own Dowager Queen Mary!" (Bold mine.)

The Duke of Windsor, the *New York Times* reported on October 16th, 1937, "continues to give a modified Hitler salute." It was, doubtless, a generous concession on the Duke's part to "modify" the salute. Perhaps if he could have foreseen Goering's bomberboys enjoying their daily sport, just before the Battle of Britain, of leisurely

flying up the Thames to wipe out vast sections of his country and his people, he might have omitted the salute altogether. But he was not gifted with such prescience, and doubtless regrets it very bitterly.

Be that as it may, the frustrated head-waiter who undertook to set down his critical views of the Windsors, manages to bracket none other than Winston Churchill (whom, of course he calls "Winnie" with a nice consistency to his usual taste), that stentorian anti-Nazi, who pleaded for years with his predecessors, Baldwin and Chamberlain, to stop the Nazis before they could get started—this man, the potato-peeling panderer dares to associate with the friendliness shown the Nazis by the Windsors!

"Benevolent Mr. Churchill, forever the champion of the maladroitness Edward . . . got his royal friend and protegee named Governor of the Bahamas . . ."

A more ironic fate could hardly have been devised for the gayety-craving exiles than condemning them to the dreary society of an island Government House, and they got themselves out of it and into the Waldorf-Astoria and the Stork Club as speedily as possible. But one wonders at the scorn displayed for the mighty Churchill when our inky-fingered busboy was so infatuated with the famous Baldwin. The kindest word I remembered any one using for Baldwin was "bumbling."

In his memoirs the Duke frequently refers to a "sinister and purposeful little black beetle," the small Austin car used by the multi-millionaire Prime Minister Baldwin for his visits to Fort Belvedere when he was making his unsuccessful attempts to get the then King to give up

Mrs. Simpson.

Over this casual reference, our writer, who forms most of his judgments while patronizing the outer entrances of only the very best restaurants, such as the Colony, pauses to shed a crocodile tear or two. Remarking it as a well known fact that the Prime Minister's first duty is to protect the monarchy—to hell with such unimportant trivia as government and administration — our courtier deals stringently with the Duke for making unkind comments on the portly Baldwin's little car. That Baldwin could have cut himself in small pieces and had a Rolls-Royce for each of them had he so chosen has no bearing.

Of course Baldwin was doing his duty in trying to prevent the King from abdicating and the King was following his chosen course—in itself an interesting commentary on our changing times—by insisting on marriage with the woman he loved. The giving up of the world's most important remaining throne for love was an event in history which paradoxically made clear the increasing tidal strength of democracy, and even though the principals of the drama were not themselves a part of any strong political current they marked its progress.

Since this was the vital fact in the abdication, it half-amuses and half-plagues me that a wholly insignificant gossip and recipe-monger, who calls himself a democratic American, should be moved to take up his little matchstick cudgels and administer a tiny drubbing to the quaint, shadowy anachronistic figure of the former King of England for betraying that great institution, the British Crown.

OUT OF THE WOODWORK

It roused these recollections of mine and caused me to set down these random notes and speculations. The Duke and Duchess of Windsor are to me in their present life, which seems to me a vain and shallow one, somewhat unreal people. I don't patronize their habitats, the plages of Florida and Europe, and I have no time to hang about glossy New York restaurants watching deposed kings and would-be queens living out, in selfish luxury, lives of perfumed dust.

But I am a little grateful to the kitchen snooper, with his half-formed notions of slick journalism, his peculiar garbling of English syntax and his servile snobbishness, for putting me in mind of the anecdotes I relate here; but mostly for causing me to reflect that in this whole story there are emotional overtones and undertones which have their appeal to me as a poet and novelist and, thus, as an observer and recorder of human behavior.

It was my observation of these emotional overtones and undertones that led to my writing the next chapter.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Duchess of Windsor: A portrait of Femina

WHAT a woman ordinarily is to a man can be defined in ordinary terms. What a woman can be to a man under particular, almost emergency conditions, creates a field of speculation extending broadly to the left and to the right, depending on the man's special need and upon the woman's special capacity to fill it.

Every woman is formed for the reception of at least one man, with the special humor and powers of enticement with which to mold herself into a home for him—a home vast enough and warm enough to hold him in such comfort that he need find no other. In return



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for this the woman expects and usually receives the whole of the man's creative energy.

To receive all that a man has to offer her is not difficult for a woman. If necessary, she can make herself into a home for more than one man. Holy Church calls this sinful. Custom frowns on it. But the woman is wise. She knows that she is older than Holy Church and wiser than Custom. When she has found it necessary to accommodate herself to more than one man (a task sometimes more painful than childbirth) Holy Church flings after her the epithet wanton. At this the woman only smiles. She has already learned to outlive spells more evil than those cast by words.

By comparison with a woman—any woman—a man—any man—is a thing fashioned of driftwood and put together with spit. Take a good look at him in the street, in his office, in a workshop, on a throne or on a toilet board. He is, alas, a fellow of shallow pretensions and fearfully hampering limitations. When he speaks with an authority rising above the voices of men about him, the sound is that of a woman. He may be a great poet, a fine painter or a statesman of true magnitude, but the ingredients of his greatness are those of womanhood. Without enough of this quality in him, a man is too puny even to achieve an erection.

Sometimes a man so puny is born into princehood.

Montaigne tells of a king so proud that he had a stool built into his throne so that none should see him confess, by the act of leaving the room, to the animal need for passing water. But when a prince shows no inclination to pass that more precious of his fluid into the ranks

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of the young women surrounding him, by taking more than social pleasure in their company, no one thinks of attributing his failure or neglect to pride. The passion of pride and the pride of passion are not granted to him, and the only passions thought of in connection with his person are lowly ones suggesting social degradation.

It is expected of a prince to conquer;—first a woman, then a kingdom and finally, most awful of all conquests, himself. This latter conquest is sometimes deemed so nearly impossible of achievement that, in its place, a man will endeavor to conquer the world. History is a record which attests to many such endeavors. Where a prince undertakes and achieves the conquest of himself the result is rarely happy for him, but it is always a source of infinite joy to his people. Though the people flourish under princes whose reigns are free from wars and their accompanying plagues, the princes themselves are sad fellows indeed. But look at the rest—fools and fairies, every damn' one of them!

To return to the poor prince: without the desire to conquer and absorb even the first of his assignments, a woman, he is inevitably laid open to the charge of puniness. In the morning, if the day be fair, the sun laughs at him through his palace windows. If the day be cloudy, every cloud is a bearer of awful portent, threatening the most evil of accusations against his manhood and fertility. If such a prince has sisters, they scorn to play with him. If he has brothers, they openly despise him. Out of the voiceless whispers of the conscienceless crowd the accusation of homosexuality reaches out for him and gets to him. And his heart breaks with self-pity, for he

knows that even homosexuals have not such a bad time in life.

What is not puny about such an unfortunate prince is his need, his great need—a want as great and as pitiless as mankind's general need for salvation—for a special kind of salvation in the shape of a woman who can awaken and enlarge him in his manhood. If he finds her his gratitude will outweigh all else in his life, and his enslavement will be complete. But where will he find her and what kind of woman will she be?

She need not be an especially beautiful woman, certainly. In the society of princes, a woman must be a rag-on-a-bone, surely, not to appear beautiful. She need not be rich, for where is there a prince so untalented that he is unable to steal all the money he needs for the extravagances of his female retinue? And she does not have to be virtuous. Virtue is, in—fact, one of the three attributes which disqualify a woman for the company of the great, the other two being loquaciousness and cynicism. Virtue is a commodity of value only to the lower and middle classes. Of talk the great have plenty, and the very existence of a prince is in itself the essence of cynicism. And whatever the princely temper may be, there is no need for the woman to be a downright whore, a natural bitch, a mere fluid crack, totally dead to the interests and passions of her lord's subjects.

To be able to bring about the miracle of personal salvation for a prince marked with the curse of puniness, a woman must, first of all, be of a people other than the prince's people. No one of his own kind could invite him seductively enough for him to cross the dreadful gap.

If it were possible she should be, like Balkis, of another race. She must be able to say more eloquently with a look what all the women of his kingdom labor to express by literary and physical correspondence. Most important of all, however, she must be the very incarnation of passivity. Lacking this last quality and possessing all others a thousandfold, she brings the prince nothing.

What is this holy quiet, this incarnation of passivity?

Do you know how delicately the leaves of a tree must be adjusted to its branches, so that even the faintest of land breezes will wake it into stirring, tremulous life?

Have you any idea how calm must be the waters of ocean, so that the grey wing of a gull, flying high over a tall, proud ship, may reflect in them, gently and clearly?

Have you ever thought what the heart of a woman must be, in the terror of yieldingness, that she can let herself sink, ever so slowly, into the embrace of a leper?

And have you ever taken the pains to consider what a fearful alliance exists, in reason, between a man's desire and a woman's need; between an old man's eyes and a young girl's understanding; between the boastfulness of an athlete and the subtlety of a wit?

If you have entered into a true understanding of these and like considerations, there is nothing you have not learned, there is nothing else for you to know about the nature of incarnate passivity.

When the Prince of Wales saw Wallis Simpson for the first time she was already a woman once divorced and twice married. She was, in the eyes of the world as well as in the eyes of the prince, to be seen as a woman who

had already received and accommodated two men—and they had obviously found her sweet and good, for no complaint against her of a moral nature had ever been registered. But, in addition to the fact that two marriages had left her childless, she had not found in either of her husbands a need sharp enough to pierce below the surface of her good nature—that second virginity of womanhood on which the psychologists have not yet filed their reports.

The physical virginity of a woman is a delicate membrane easily pierced, and the piercing of it sometimes leads a man into a dark alley of futility, not unlike the one described (in larger proportion, of course) by John Bunyan, in his *Pilgrim's Progress*. But in every normal woman, for the gratification of the truly sensitive man, there exists that second layer of virginity which may be described as her fundamental good nature or her spiritual self. This second virginity is far less easily pierced than the first, but the piercing of it affords far greater attractions and compensations to those who need them and can appreciate them. The obliteration of this spiritual membrane (in composition it is to the physical one as steel is to gossamer) is a task so great that it cannot be achieved by a man who is unaided by the powerful impetus of a need, a tremendous need, for what lies behind it. When his need is sufficiently profound, the steel swiftly, almost magically, dissolves to gossamer.

In his recently published memoirs, Windsor records that the memory of his first meeting with Wallis Simpson troubled his mind. It is the understatement of the twentieth century. The appearance of Wallis Simpson

not only upset but completely metamorphosed him. He goes on to record how simple every one of his chores suddenly became for him. He had no means of knowing that it was he, not his work, that was growing simpler. What he failed to read in the easing of his work was the lifting from his shoulders of an immense burden that had weighed him down since boyhood. It was no longer important that he be a man capable of adding an heir to the endless succession of the English sovereignty. He was in fact, in himself, a man. Even if no children should issue from his union with this wonderful woman, the accusation of puniness would melt away and perish in its own contempt. Other accusations would follow, of course, but they would be more bearable.

The queens of England have been notably coarse women. Forgive me, David, if I suddenly seem grossly offensive, but so it has been since the beginning, and I know whereof I speak. I was but one of tens of thousands at Ascot for the 1921 running of the Derby when your grandmother, the Queen Mother Alexandra, pushed aside your mother Mary, the reigning queen, in order to be first to descend from the royal carriage. It was a signal to the vast onlooking population that Alexandra had not forgotten the days when a King of England, your grandfather Edward, led her by the hand so that her foot should be first to touch the ground. The signal had grandeur but it was coarse, you will admit. And you will not dispute it, for you were there, not far from me, and you saw it as well as I, and deeply offended you were by the shocking spectacle. But if you were shocked by it, this act of your grandmother had, on me, not even

the impact of surprise.

For me the act of your grandmother, Alexandra, was merely reminiscent of similar acts of dozens of English queens before her. There was Catherine Parr, who wiped her nose with her fingers. There was Anne, who couldn't persuade the humblest of charladies to clean up after her seventeen dirty children. There was Elizabeth, nourishing her multitudinous lice under her red and royal wig. And there was Victoria, archhypocrite of a hypocritical era, who worshipped the foppish Albert, adored Disraeli, the impeccable dandy, but gave her favors to the Queen's ghillie, her unkempt Scottish gardener. It is hardly enough to say of the queens of England that sometimes they are less than queenly.

For instance, I well remember that during that same year the Queen of England announced that, as a measure of economy, the laundry at Buckingham Palace was being closed down and henceforward the shirts, shorts and diapers of its royal tenants would be farmed out for washing by the lowest bidders—preferably some outfit which would volunteer to do the work for nothing. As a newspaperman I had a natural curiosity as to what would come of this giant stride forward in the national economy, but what I learned astonished me far beyond my natural journalistic capacity for astonishment. The rate finally accepted by Buckingham Palace was much higher than that asked by the poor laundress who did my washing as well as the washing of a great many other people who lived alongside me in Markham Square.

"How come?" I asked along King's Road. "How come? Merchants are usually eager to indite on their windows,

their stationery and their advertising that they purvey to his Majesty. Wasn't there any value to you in being able to announce that you wash the royal socks and garters?"

"This is different," they all replied. But in the sulkiness of their answers I detected a story and the getting of stories being my business on the right little, tight little isle, I went after this one, and got it.

The story was this. The reason the palace laundry was not in demand was the same reason that had caused the palace laundry workers to quit by the score for humbler and more ill-paid employment, even in such districts as Limehouse. The reason was, in a word—not a nice word, but one which has to be said, no matter what offense it may give to whom—that the laundry of the royal family always stank.

The present matronly and comely Queen of England is a departure from the general run. She looks like a good housekeeper, smug and suburban, but she got the job only by default, because Windsor failed to get it for Wallis Simpson. And how, I wonder, would Wallis Simpson, the sweet-scented woman of the world, have qualified among the coarse women who have occupied England's throne?

As a matter of fact, the exquisite person of Wallis Simpson has caused her to be a target of censorious tongues. A considerable attention to self-adornment appearing to involve staggering sums of money is the chief accusation leveled by her critics at Wallis Simpson. It is true that she is always sumptuously dressed and a contemporary photograph taken at the time of her mar-

riage to the Duke shows her pointing with glee to an enormous jewel pinned on her gown. But the Duchess of Windsor could say, as sober fact, that she spends, on shoes, stockings, dresses, hats, undies and furs, a proportion of the family income not comparable to that spent by a fifty dollar a week typist or the wife of a clothing manufacturer making a hundred thousand a year. The Duchess does not trouble to answer her critics. Her beauty and undeniable charm are answers withering enough in themselves.

What people earn or possess are reckonings which belong in the world of comparative finance, an institution which derives more from intermediate algebra than from human psychology. What they spend on housing and machinery is part and parcel of the sphere of statistics, an undisputed stronghold of pundits and humbugs. But what men and women spend on the things they wear in public is something else again. This is self-adornment and is a very important part of the world of art.

According to prevailing fashions men and women are unattractive or beautiful in each other's eyes and esteem and thus raise or lower each other's passion for life. A nation can be so poor either economically or in its dynamics of aesthetics as to make itself a shabby nation.

As the French are noted for the instinctive and highly developed beauty in their styling of clothes, so the people of England (outside the incomparable tailoring of Savile Row) are equally marked by their instinctive avoidance of anything that could be described as fine taste in apparel. If you're an American, and you happen to have some reason for standing on a corner of Picca-

dilly Circus any night of the week, including Saturday, your wonder will increase with the passing of every honest, badly dressed citizen. Presently you will say to yourself, These people are not just modest, they have a positive talent for looking like hell!

Wallis Simpson is superbly American in the particular elegance, its elements combined from many lands, which she has made her own. No one could possibly mistake her for a Britisher nor, for all her cosmopolitan finish, could she be taken for a European. She is unique and uniquely American. She was a woman of fashion long before she met the man who was to surrender England's throne in order to become her husband. It is a designation often employed unkindly, but what is a woman of fashion? I do not think the term has been quite clearly understood, at least not in this generation.

It goes without saying that a woman can choose her attire only from the selections offered her by the shops and couturieres of the country where she visits or resides. Ordinarily she does not design or cut or sew, she merely buys. But when a lady such as the Duchess of Windsor accepts a gown from Fath or Christian Dior and puts it on, there is accomplished something which is more in the nature of a work of art than a mere commercial transaction. The whole business becomes, not a mere sale, but a high adventure. The mark of a woman of fashion is that where the fancies of other women falter, hers take wing, combining the throat of the lark with the sure talons of the eagle.

As it works out with the flora and fauna of creation, whose numbers expand or shrink with the colors and

other beneficences of the seasons and the economies of local yields in berries, juices and clear, pure water, so it is with the preternatural and preterhuman powers of men and women. As soon as the economies of her life made it possible, Wallis Simpson moved to Paris. The resulting combination—American money and Parisian feeling for beauty in dress—was absolutely irresistible.

In Paris, Cannes, on the Lido at Venice, Mrs. Simpson became known as a woman of the most fastidious style and the kind of sophistication that is the most rare because it embodies womanly grace. Into her leisured and ornamental existence swept the Prince of Wales, that most glamorous of the world's future monarchs.

We will never know if Wallis Simpson was instantly aware of the prince's emotional difficulties. We can only surmise from the charm and wisdom of her smiling gaze that she is one of those remarkable women who seem to be born knowing everything of any importance—the very incarnation of the most exquisite passivity. History caught her up and made her into the most celebrated woman of her time. A quirk of fate, a difference of Prime Ministers, might have placed her among the ill-scented

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the ill-scented roster of England's queens. Personally I am glad it didn't so happen. She is more decorative where she is and my hat is off to the American woman who, when denied a world kingdom, created one of her own.

Millions of words of copy have been filed about the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, by their admirers and their detractors alike. I have dealt with what I know of them not less kindly or more tactfully than should be required of an objective journalist. But I hope I have been fair and, so far as truth is not relative, truthful. For any possible lese majesty, I have no apologies. So far as I am concerned, from now on, their private lives are their own.

CHAPTER NINE

The Portrait Grows

THE day after the final, decisive sentences of Chapter Eight of this book were written in all solemnity and the manuscript was handed to the printer as the whole of the work to be published, the morning newspapers flashed news of the Windsors' return from abroad to the United States. Tidings of the death of George VI, David's brother Bertie, followed in a matter of days.

Everywhere, in the mind of everyone about me, grew the conviction that events were forcing a new ending for my book. I resented it. A writer should know better than anyone else, even his publisher, I announced firmly, where his book might begin and should end. With no

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consideration for the force and morality of world-feeling? was the rejoinder. This and similar arguments (which the reader can anticipate for himself) were insurmountable and I was compelled to yield.

As I write this, the correct verses have been recited in Westminster, the funeral of the late king, begun in London, has wound up in his ancestral home in Windsor, Elizabeth is the constitutional monarch of England, and the Duke of Windsor is arranging to return to America, as he reached England for the solemn services, without his wife. I don't know how he plans to travel. But I believe that if he had the choice he would do it by canoe.

The departure of the Duke for the funeral without the woman I love was the culmination of a series of events comprising one of the most dramatic chapters in the history of human relationships. While I cannot say that I myself have witnessed the following three scenes or vouch for every word reported in them, I can state with all seriousness that I have reason to believe that they represent as truly as is possible in such secret matters exactly what happened.

SCENE ONE: The sitting room of the New York hotel suite occupied by the Duke and Duchess of Windsor. The Duchess is seated near a large open window. The Duke, who appears to have returned from somewhere in great haste, pulls up a chair and sits down beside her.

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THE DUKE

(Wringing his hands) I can't seem to take it in. We had every assurance that he was recovering. And suddenly—(His hands unclasp into a gesture of futility). What's the use? what's the use of anything?

WALLIS

What are you going to do?

THE DUKE

My plain duty, of course. I must go to England immediately for the service, and to bring whatever little comfort I can to my mother.

WALLIS

Are you planning to go alone?

THE DUKE

Of course.

WALLIS

So there's to be still more comfort for your mother, and still less comfort for me, is that it?

THE DUKE

But it never occurred to me that you would want to get into such a mass of blackness and sadness just for me.

WALLIS

You seem to forget that sadness has become the steadiest of my moods these last sixteen years. As to whom I shall be doing it for, did it ever occur to you that it might be for myself?

THE DUKE

Frankly, no.

WALLIS

Is it possible that you fail to see that this is my one great opportunity—perhaps the only one I shall ever have?

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THE DUKE

I don't think I quite understand you. An opportunity for what?

WALLIS

Since you can only understand what is set before you baldly and clumsily, this is my opportunity to take my place at your side in the English aristocracy where we both belong—at the crest of English nobility, the crest of the world.

THE DUKE

My dear Wallis, this is most amazing—after all you've done and said to make me believe that you didn't give a snap about royalty, that my abdication and exile were what exactly suited you, suited both of us best.

WALLIS

You'd have known better if you were not so infernally naive. Those were the words and acts of a disappointed woman. Ever since we began to understand each other I have had only one thought—and that was to be one with the nobility of your country and people.

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THE DUKE

There's more than one opinion as to what constitutes the nobility of my country and people.

WALLIS

Dreams, words, words, dreams. I'm talking of the real thing, the only thing a woman can possibly be interested in.

THE DUKE

After all the horrible things they said and did to you?

WALLIS

They'll all be forgotten after the first curtsy I receive in the throne-room of Buckingham Palace. Since you're bound to find out eventually I might as well let you know now that all those taunts and insults meant nothing to me. From earliest girlhood I've felt that I was born for nothing less than membership in a royal family—I was not particular, any royal family would have done. I thought it quite wonderful when you came along with your prospects of the English throne, the English being reputed to be so democratic in their fashion of aristo-

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cracy. When it turned out so differently, when it turned out that they wouldn't accept even a morganatic marriage, that has been sanctioned in every court in Europe, I must tell you I was quite shocked. It needed only a nod from your mother to set things right. Knowing how much it meant not only to me but to her beloved son as well, she still refused it. It was quite dreadful of her.

THE DUKE

I've warned you against speaking that way of my mother.

WALLIS

Forgive me. I won't ever do it again. What I've been trying to point out to you is that events have changed all this. Your mother is now powerless to interfere with us.

THE DUKE

I must be in a particularly thick funk today. I just don't understand you. I don't see how poor Bertie's death can have made such a difference in your ability to be received at the Court of England. And I must go back to my original point. After all that's happened, how can

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you want to even associate with some of those people? I wonder if you know that most of the men at the court are plain fops and that the girls pee into their drawers at receptions till they're fourteen. I don't know what makes them stop then—unless it's the magic of the numeral fourteen.

WALLIS

Stop being an imbecile and listen to me. Is it or is it not true that you and Elizabeth have always been on very agreeable terms?

THE DUKE

Quite true. Uncle Davy has always been all that is required of an uncle even by a niece as exacting as Lillibeth. But I was even friendlier with Bertie, and a hell of a lot of good that did us.

WALLIS

There you go swearing again, like a commoner at an English pub. America hasn't been too good for your manners.

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THE DUKE

Never mind my manners. What makes you think my niece Elizabeth can do more for you than Bertie who did nothing?

WALLIS

Bertie received the throne from you practically as a gift. There was nothing he could do for you without it appearing that he was making repayment for a favor. And in the sense in which you have always been enslaved to your mother, Bertie was too, perhaps even more so than you. Elizabeth is not only so much farther removed from your mother; she can't have forgotten your many kindnesses to her, your constant reminders to her that some day she would be queen of England. She won't even consider consulting your mother. It will be just a matter of your telling her how happy it would make you if I were admitted and her consenting to it almost without thinking.

THE DUKE

You draw a very naive picture of my niece Elizabeth. Maybe she looks like a softie, maybe she even is a softie, but no woman is a softie once she has sat down on the dour hard throne of England. When Lillibeth gets to

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queening she'll be as firm, as just and as unfeeling as that Queen Bloody Mary whom you occasionally throw up to me in our amiable discussions of English royalty. But Lilibeth is no softie, I can assure you. I know my dear, sweet, simple, simply irresistible niece Lilibeth. I remember a conversation of grown-ups she tried to break into. "It's royalty speaking!" she cried, banging her fists on the table. Lilibeth a softie, that's funny. Take it from me, no queen of England has been or ever will be a softie.

WALLIS

I would have been soft—if they'd ever let me sit down on the damn thing.

THE DUKE

Maybe that's why they were so determined not to let you. A woman isn't born into the English throne. She has to be cultivated, grown into it. Anyway, you were born soft, Wally. (Leans forward and kisses her on the cheek).

WALLIS

Thank you, dear, it's a long time since it's occurred

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to you to display this—this courtesy to me as your wife. Tell me, will you make this one more effort, one more try?

THE DUKE

Talk to Lilibeth?

WALLIS

Precisely.

THE DUKE

And when do you suggest that I conduct this extraordinary conversation?

WALLIS

As soon as possible, naturally.

THE DUKE

Before the funeral?

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WALLIS

That doesn't sound sensible.

THE DUKE

During the funeral?

WALLIS

I see what you're up to. You're trying to outrage me.

THE DUKE

I've never tried to outrage you, and I'm not trying now. I'm only trying to reason with you, and you must be reasonable, reasonably reasonable. Besides, it's a mistake to read irony into love. It's a bad mixture.

WALLIS

We'll forget about it. The only time to speak to your niece is after the funeral, and I want you to promise me that you'll do this. I know that you don't believe it'll do any good, but I want you to make the effort, no mat-

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ter what happens, even if you are discouraged from doing it by any one of the people who will guess that that is your intention. Don't you see? You'll talk to her. I'll be practically on the scene. It'll become a matter of time, just a little more time in which to wait.

THE DUKE

But how do you propose to get to England?

WALLIS

With you, of course. On your way to your brother's funeral. What is more natural than that I, your wife, should accompany you?

THE DUKE

Unfortunately, the natural or the sensible way of looking at things, does not enter into the affairs of royalty — not in England, anyway. And you apparently forget a very important item on the agenda of our marriage. When I left England to marry you, it was tacitly understood that I was never to bring you back as a member of the royal family. It's as a member of the royal family that I'm going back to mourn my brother Bertie.

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WALLIS

You make everything sound so formidable and impossible. But it can be done. I know it can be done if you only try. All these years the trouble has been that while you tried for the achievement of our happiness you never tried hard enough. I tell you that if you try hard enough this time we can still make it. Please, please, David.

THE DUKE

(Kissing her hand.) You haven't called me that in a long time. But you keep forgetting one thing. What I'm going back to is not a festival but a funeral, not for me the funeral of a king, but of my beloved Bertie. At this time, how can you think of wanting to burden me with such — such motives?

WALLIS

(Bursts into tears.) I might have expected this — after all these years of frustration and loneliness.

THE DUKE

Frustration I can understand. But how have you been lonely?

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WALLIS

Companionship can be the most dreadful of all lonelinesses. Let me put it to you this way. When you married me you took me bodily out of all the contacts of my own world, but failed to find a place for me in yours. Before I die I've got to find some place to live in naturally and normally, like any other woman, and this is possible only in your world.

THE DUKE

(Sighs deeply.) Very well, then. Tell me what to do.

WALLIS

I can't tell you that. I don't know any more what is to be done than you do. But you can go to the British Embassy in Washington where someone — someone very clever in such matters — is bound to know and will be able to tell you how to manage it.

THE DUKE

It can't be done by someone in the Embassy. As Duke of Windsor the only one in the Embassy I'm qualified to consult is the Ambassador himself. It would cause no

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and of mischief if I took the matter up with anyone else,

WALLIS

Always those little rules and regulations. What do care whom you consult as long as what I want is accomplished? Talk to the Ambassador by all means, but talk to him you must and don't keep on putting it off. Here is the telephone. (Indicating it on the little table between them.)

The Duke kisses her once more, this time on the mouth, and picks up the gray receiver.

SCENE TWO: A reception room in the British Embassy in Washington, D. C. The Ambassador and the Duke are deep in their conversation.

THE AMBASSADOR

I know exactly what you're after, your Highness. wish I could advise you as to the safest course to follow. You must realize that, under the circumstances, it would be hazardous for me to offer any advice — no matter how much confidence I had in it. Things can always miscarry in high places. A spill in high places always involves a very heavy fall earthward.

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THE DUKE

I appreciate your care, but I believe you overestimate the dangers involved. Winston Churchill is Prime Minister, and you know how he stood by my wife and me in the great crisis in our lives.

THE AMBASSADOR

I know that and I'm not forgetting it. But what Mr. Churchill did when the prime Minister was Mr. Baldwin is hardly a measure of what may be expected of him now that the Prime Minister is Mr. Churchill.

THE DUKE

Are you suggesting that as Prime Minister himself he would adopt the attitude he so freely denounced in Mr. Baldwin when Mr. Churchill was in Parliament? How could he morally justify such a reversal of position?

THE AMBASSADOR

But there will be no need for Mr. Churchill to reverse himself. All he will have to tell you, and he will tell you with vast candor and dignity, is that how you bring your wife into England is no concern of his as Prime Min-

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ister of the British Commonwealth.

THE DUKE

Incidentally, whose concern is it?

THE AMBASSADOR

As I see it, the concern is mostly yours. In law, the whole thing rests in a state of anarchy in which almost anyone can do almost anything calculated to mortally hurt your wife — and you, too.

THE DUKE

But there must be some precedent to go by.

THE AMBASSADOR

No doubt, but even if we managed to find them here, who on this side of the Atlantic is in a position to so authenticate them? And in a matter of hours you must be on your way.

THE PORTRAIT GROWS

THE DUKE

How about doing the research when I get to England?

THE AMBASSADOR

It couldn't be done quickly enough to avert the worst.

THE DUKE

Winston Churchill is a good scholar, and he has a marvelous memory. He'd be able to tell us what to do within five minutes.

THE AMBASSADOR

The question is, will he?

THE DUKE

But why wouldn't he?

THE AMBASSADOR

Simply because — as the Americans so aptly put it — there's nothing in it for him — personally or politically.

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THE DUKE

(Rising.) I believe I have a right to say that I resent that sort of speech in a representative of the British Commonwealth.

THE AMBASSADOR

Yes, you have the right. As a matter of sober fact, it is almost a duty for you to resent such an implication. I am not even sure that it wasn't something of treason for me to make it. Forgive the indiscretion. I can only explain it as arising from the sympathy you have aroused in me in behalf of you and the Duchess. I feel with both of you in your distress. But I know what goes on in England. If you trust too eagerly to past friendships you're bound to end up in a state of irreparable embarrassment.

THE DUKE

(Sinking back into his seat.) If you can find it in your heart, please forgive me. In my impatience with myself I did not understand. You are really very kind. But there is still one more kindness you can do me, if you will. You can answer a question that is now beating desperately in the back of my brain. You talked a moment ago of the worst. What is the worst that can hap-

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pen if I take my wife along with me to my brother's funeral?

THE AMBASSADOR

Upon your arrival in London, she may be requested either to remain in her hotel-room or join the general populace in the funeral procession.

THE DUKE

(Half rising, then falling back in his seat.) They would dare do that?

THE AMBASSADOR

They would do it, and it would require no display of daring.

THE DUKE

(Rising once more, and extending his hand to the Ambassador.) I understand you now. You have been more than kind. A duke of England should have more than a handshake to offer in exchange for such gallantry.

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The Ambassador escorts his guest to the door of the reception chamber where his stands bowed until the Duke has disappeared.

SCENE THREE: The same as Scene One. The Duke and the Duchess are seated near the great window. From the way the Duke's hands are clasped in his lap, it is obvious that he has already rendered the Duchess a complete report of what transpired between himself and the British Ambassador.

WALLIS

So it was all for nothing.

THE DUKE

I didn't say so.

WALLIS

I say so. It was for all nothing — absolutely nothing.

THE PORTRAIT GROWS

THE DUKE

You talk as if we had come to the end of the world. Only wait and see. As soon as the funeral is over —

WALLIS

(Interrupting) — and you have comforted your mother.

THE DUKE

(Pretending not to have heard the interruption.) I'll go over to the old homestead and have a heart to heart chat with Lilibeth —

WALLIS

(Interrupting again — this time with a heavier irony in her voice.) It won't do any good to talk to Lilibeth. You've convinced me of that. Lilibeth will be as reluctant to go against the prejudices of your precious court as Bertie was. The reasons will be different reasons but the outcome will be just as decisive and just as cruel. Your mother has erected between me and my happiness a stone wall I shall never be able to climb. Today it is her personal will. Tomorrow it will be the memory of that will, and, who knows, the memory might even be

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more forbidding than the original will itself. It's all been for nothing, I tell you.

THE DUKE

Your Americans have the right way to treat such a thing. They simply shrug their shoulders and say So what?

WALLIS

Did you ever get a good look at some of those shoulders?

THE DUKE

I'm not impressed. I can pad out my shoulders with the best of them. Did your father never read to you from the book of Ecclesiastes? Vanity of Vanities, saith the Preacher. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. That's the way to look at it. I'll get back in jig time and we'll have some wonderful times together.

WALLIS

Like those we've always had?

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THE DUKE

Well, why not?

WALLIS

Did you ever ask me whether I enjoyed them?

THE DUKE

There are many things a man does not feel he has to ask his wife.

WALLIS

Especially when he's afraid of what the answer might be. I could laugh if it were still in me to laugh at anything. You and your wonderful times. Where, when? I've a right to know if I've been happy and haven't noticed it. I'm a woman with the conviction that it's sixteen years since I've had a good moment. Disabuse me of it — if you can.

THE DUKE

You always loved — seemed to love — your trips to Paris.

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WALLIS

To buy clothes. Where do I go to buy love, happiness? I don't care where you took me. It always came to the same thing — clothes, perfumes, new hairdos — nothing else. You can't possibly be sane and believe that any of our sojourns abroad were ever accompanied by as much as the ghost of a pleasure or an excitement.

THE DUKE

Right here in New York —

WALLIS

(Laughing outright.) At the Colony?

THE DUKE

Let it be the Colony, then. Are you trying to tell me that you get no fun out of it?

WALLIS

You're thinking of my entrances, the scenes of my

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many social unweillings. How many times more do you think we can go through that before they all burst out laughing right in our faces?

THE DUKE

Why those people have been wonderful to us. How can you conceive of them so monstrously?

WALLIS

They understand our value to them as advertising material. But with all their noisy kowtowing to us in public, I want you to notice that they have not yet refused entry to that contemptible little reptile who has been slandering us from pillar to post from every gossip-column in the United States.

THE DUKE

Maybe they just don't know how to get rid of him.

WALLIS

They don't want to keep him out. I believe that they're

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keeping him for some final showdown between us — when they decide to let the curtain drop on the hypocrisy of their demonstrativeness toward us. I'll tell you another reason why they hold on to that diseased squirrel. It's salvage to their democratic conscience. Yes, they kneel to me as if I were a queen, but they're as democratic at heart as any Tammany politician. It's all been for nothing, I tell you.

THE DUKE

You've repeated that phrase a dozen times tonight. I'm beginning not to like it, to be afraid of it.

WALLIS

You've reason to be afraid of it.

THE DUKE

I understand. It's your delicate way of informing me that you can't ever be happy because your only happiness can be in active participation in the court life of England.

WALLIS

Understanding comes a little late to you. You should have understood this from the beginning. And if you had understood it you might have made a more intelligent, at any rate a more determined effort to fight for your right to remain on the throne of your ancestors.

THE DUKE

No one ever tried to deny me that right. Only it was

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made quite clear that I could not keep both the throne and you, and I chose to keep you. I have never regretted this choice.

WALLIS

Thank you. Such small mercies are all there is left for me to live on.

THE DUKE

Believe me, Wallis, I had working in my behalf the most astute constitutional lawyers in all England. Between Baldwin's passionate opposition and the indifference of the dominions there was nothing to be done about it.

WALLIS

Baldwin played tricks, you've as much as admitted it.

THE DUKE

I don't deny it now.

WALLIS

The hell with constitutional law. There were tricks for you to play — only you didn't think it worth while to play them.

THE DUKE

Surely by that time you knew me well enough to know that I am not a man to play tricks — especially in matters affecting the welfare of my country.

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WALLIS

I am a woman. A woman courted by a man expects him to use every possible weapon of force or trickery on her behalf. It makes no difference to her whether the man is a cowherd or king. The real objective of that man has to be the possession and happiness of the woman. The rest of the paraphernalia is byplay, even if in its midst there happens to stand a throne.

THE DUKE

(Rising impetuously.) Clearly I was not the man for you from the beginning. What in the name of all that gracious did you want of me?

WALLIS

You were the only man I knew with a throne in the offing. But you've failed me, you've failed me miserably.

THE DUKE

I'm sorry, Wally.

WALLIS

You're sorry. You should take a good swift look in my heart one of these days. You would then know what it is to be sorry. You would know what it is to be desolate. You would know what it is to be a woman like in a world shining with strong, goodnatured men. David —

Here we mercifully draw down the curtain.

CHAPTER TEN

Three Queens Under One Umbrella

THE kings of England come and the kings of England go but the queens of England queen on forever.

During the recent vast preparations under way in England for the funeral of the late George VI, a New York newspaper reproduced a snapshot — probably taken by a news photographer with a hangover — showing the three queens of England, the dowager, the widow and the reigning queen, huddling in the outer darkness of one of the London palaces undoubtedly waiting to re-

THREE QUEENS UNDER ONE UMBRELLA

hearse the parts they were to play in the big national show to take place the following Friday.

The kings of England die young, or, like Richard the Lion-Hearted, they escape into the kindlier climates of foreign wars. Unless they are publicly butchered for wantonness or licentiousness, as were the wives of Henry VIII, the queens of England live until most of their subjects who knew them as living people have either died or forgotten them, until they choke in their own breaths.

Queen Elizabeth and Queen Victoria are not so much the names of queens as they are the names of human perpetual motion machines whose endless, meaningless, distressing gyrations only the decrepitude accompanying old age could put an end to.

Here — I have the photograph before me as I write — huddled under a palace umbrella — stand these three women. In her time, each of them was, and one of them still is, wife to a splendid man — a man doomed, alas, to earlier futility, defeat and death. The youngest of these — the new queen — may prove the possibilities of English mercy searched for and found missing in her great-grandmother, Queen Victoria. But, things being what they are, I doubt it extremely.

The kings of England graduate, as a matter of course, into officers of high rank in the British navy. The queens

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of England do not ask for and do not receive any such rank. But in her own way, every queen of England gradually begins to resemble one of her own battleships. The queen's subjects do not notice it, but her husband does. It is the subtle beginning of his undoing. It is nothing he can even be bitter about in ordinary jest unless, like Edward VII, he spends most of his time on the continent strictly minding his own business.

The growing resemblance of an English queen to one of her battleships is a very serious matter for her husband. If the Hood had been destroyed a decade before the Bismarck heaved her bodily out of the north seas, it is just possible that George V, husband of the Dowager Mary, would have lived another ten years.

The young one to the left — the new queen — is quite pretty. More, she has a definite, girlish charm. The woman to the left of the trio under this enormous umbrella is of the stuff and heft of queendom. She could be good, she could even be human, if she did not have to conform with her own destiny.

I look at the picture and wonder. What would have become of the Duke of Windsor if he had accidentally remained Edward VIII? This would have depended largely on the sort of woman who became his queen. That he would have had to get along with the American princess of his own choice goes without saying. The English would

have none of her, that's a certainty. But a king has to have a queen, and he would have found one, or, more likely, one would have been found for him, somewhere in the British Isles, proud enough and sturdy enough to stand under this umbrella. She would be standing here, out of the rain and yet in the midst of it, a heavy linen handkerchief pressed against her sturdy nose.

As for the Duke and where he would be now if he had not abdicated — luckily it no longer seems necessary to go into that. And clearly — all appearances to the contrary notwithstanding — he is to be congratulated.